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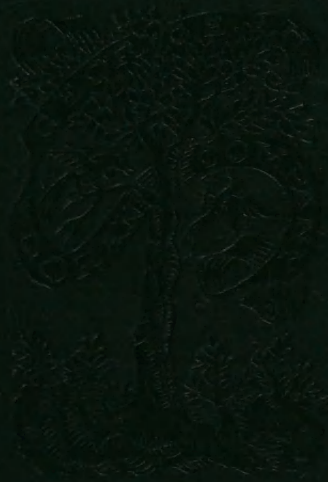

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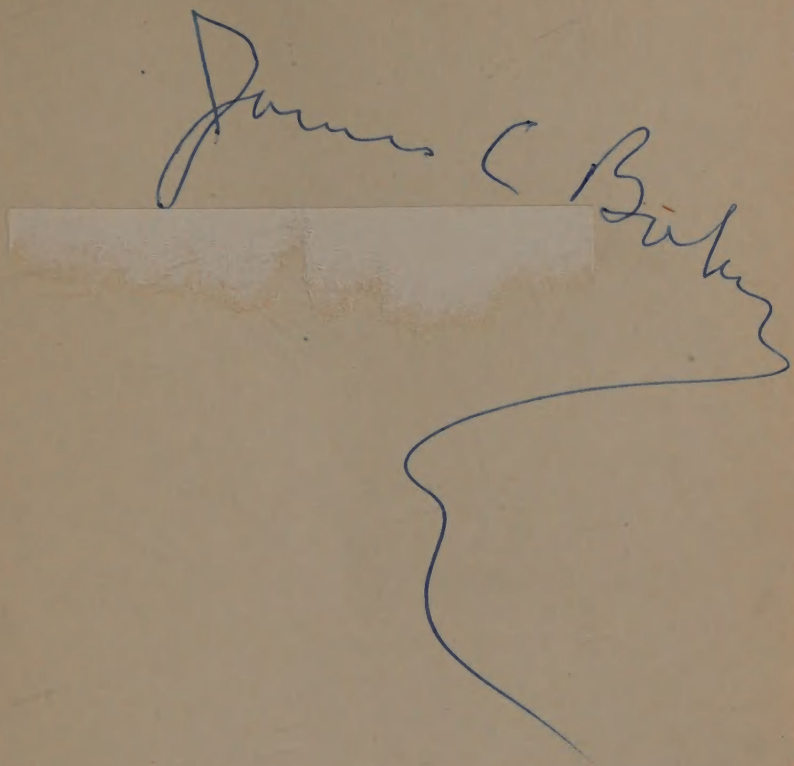

THE HEROES OF SMOKEOVER

By L. P. Jacks, D.D., LL.D., D.Litt.

THE HEROES OF SMOKEOVER
THE LEGENDS OF SMOKEOVER
THE FAITH OF A WORKER
THE CHALLENGE OF LIFE
THE LOST RADIANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
A LIVING UNIVERSE
REALITIES AND SHAMS
RELIGIOUS PERPLEXITIES

THE HEROES OF SMOKEOVER

By

L. P. JACKS

PRINCIPAL OF MANCHESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD;
EDITOR OF "THE HIBBERT JOURNAL"

Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine;
Under every grief and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine;
It is right it should be so;
Man was made for joy and woe;
And when this we rightly know
Through the world we safely go.

WILLIAM BLAKE.

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

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— A —
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THE HEROES OF SMOKEOVER

CHAPTER ONE

The Mind of Smokeover

THE mind of Smokeover works in a medium of 'problems' awaiting 'solution.' These pervade the atmosphere breathed by the Smokeover mind, much as the products of combustion, whether of coal, petrol, or human respiration, pervade the atmosphere breathed by the Smokeover body. We are essentially a questioning community. We live among riddles. Our conversation is neither "yea, yea" nor "nay, nay" but "why, why?" and "how, how?" It takes an interrogative form.

Poetry, which is the original language of mankind, and abounds in "yea, yeas" and "nay, nays," has long ceased in Smokeover to be a vehicle of expression, save for professional poets; which some think a pity. We have discarded it as unsuitable for business purposes. We speak the prose of science, largely composed, so the philologists declare, of derelict poetry and decayed metaphors. This answers admirably, our business letters being much to the point, though the terminology in which they are written is often the debris of forgotten songs.

But Science, for all the positive statements she manages to drop by the way, invariably ends up with a note of interrogation, her 'facts,' as every one knows, concealing questions she cannot answer. In keeping with this, we live more vehemently than our poetical ancestors ever dreamed of living; but we ask more insistently "What is Life?" Thanks to the positive statements which Science has dropped by the way, we are immensely successful in the creation of wealth, but thanks to the note of interrogation at the end of her discoveries, are much in the dark when the question arises of what to do with the wealth we have created. So, too, our churches and chapels (described in the local Directory as "places of worship") were never so numerous as they are to-day. But when was Smokeover so ready with the question "Is there a God?" and our divines so busy in answering it? Interrogation, I repeat, is the breath of our life.

"Without a *problem* spake he not unto them"—so runs the unwritten formula under which our preachers, philosophers, poets, politicians, book-writers and journalists address themselves to our public. This is the language Smokeover understands, and though we prefer the 'problems' with 'solutions' appended, a satisfaction not always forthcoming, it is better, we think, to have them without 'solutions' than not to have them at all. 'Problems' have long ceased to be luxuries reserved for the exceptionally wise. They have become bare necessaries, the bread and water of our common intellectual life, the principal stock-in-trade of our daily intellectual traffic. 'Problem' and 'solution' are never

out of our mouths for long. Is not Smokeover itself "a social problem"? But who knows the 'solution' of it? God only.

Yet the words are not a native growth nor a very recent one. Neither 'problem' nor 'solution' is to be found in the Bible. They have the modernist ring. In most of their applications they are far-fetched metaphors, grafted on the stock of our vernacular by the diligence of Professors; and the graft having flourished and become a mighty tree, our orators and preachers now build their nests and hatch their broods in the branches thereof. At the last General Election, when feeling ran high in the city, one of our up-to-date divines, preaching on Psalm cxxvi. 1 (with a bias, some said, to the interest of Labour), gave out his text as follows:

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of
Smokeover,
We were like unto them that are wideawake.
Then was our mouth filled with problems,
And our tongue with solutions."

Our problems never leave us. They haunt the imagination of professional poets and make harsh notes in the music of their verse. Has not our Local Bard inserted a problem into every one of his *Ballads of Smokeover*, and thereby stirred up many an exciting controversy in the pulpit and the press? Nay, do not these same problems sometimes insinuate themselves into the exercises of devotion, suggesting to the praying soul that even Deity is a kind of 'solution,' and prompting agreement or disagreement with "the opinions expressed in the

prayer"? Problem-haunted the mind of Smokeover most assuredly is. Whatever we think, plan or purpose, one of these ghosts stands at our elbow and the solution waits round the corner, the conditions repeating themselves when the corner is turned.

Thus an atmosphere is generated which keeps us wideawake, as our preacher said, and prevents us from becoming like unto them that dream, or relapsing into the pure poetry of "yea, yea" and "nay, nay." *Tense* is the word that describes our spiritual condition.

There are two Smokeovers: the spiritual and the natural; the first straining forward with all its might in the direction of the New Jerusalem, the second pulling backward with all its weight in the direction of the Bottomless Pit. The relation between them is that of the two sides in a tug-of-war. Never is the progress of our City towards better things a free or unimpeded movement. At every step and moment of advance the spiritual Smokeover has to sustain the weight of the natural pulling towards the opposite. When an inch of ground has been won it must be held heroically, or it will be recaptured by the other side. A slum, for example, converted into "model dwellings," will assuredly return to its former condition—as some, alas, have already done—unless brave men and women are active in preventing the relapse.

The consequence is that the Heroes of Smokeover are never among the unemployed. With each new advance the demand for them increases, for the more ground they win the more there is for them and

their successors to hold against the forces that pull us down. Without our Heroes we should not merely cease to advance: we should inevitably go back. Some of us, indeed, are still persuaded that the New Jerusalem, if ever we get there, will maintain itself automatically, that our Heroes will then be discharged from the service, to enjoy a perpetual holiday, each one sitting under his own vine and fig tree, with his medals on his breast, and none daring to make him afraid. But the wise among us know better. They know that the New Jerusalem without heroes to defend it and martyrs to suffer for it would instantly begin to slide down the incline, and we should soon be back again in Smokeover as it is to-day, and the last state of that city would be worse than the first.

The mind of Smokeover is the product of these conditions; a mind in a state of tension created by the felt pull of opposing forces. The essential stuff composing it, the raw material out of which our mind is woven into manifold forms, is *the consciousness of strain.* We live in "a strait betwixt two," accepting Smokeover and rejecting it; loving it with one side of our nature, hating it with the other. From one point of view this consciousness of strain, this felt tension, is a painful thing, but oddly enough, it imparts to our pleasures whatever vitality they have, they, no less than our pains, being woven out of it. Most of us, not understanding its nature, would get rid of it if we could, though we always find, on trial, that the effort to get rid of it is, of all possible strains, the most exhausting to which we could expose ourselves.

But some there are among us whom the high tensions of life seem to attract and who, accordingly, throw their weight into them instead of throwing it, as the foolish ones do, into the effort to escape from strain. These men are the Heroes of Smokeover, these women the Heroines. Thanks to their valiant spirits and firmly planted feet the forces that would drag us into the pit are effectually countered; we hold our ground in the great tug-of-war, and sometimes win another inch.

Some complain of the slowness of our progress. Let them feel the strain on the ropes, as the Heroes feel it, and they will complain no more! The wonder is that we hold our ground and carry on from day to day. We owe it to our Heroes and our Heroines. But for them, and for the courage and cheerfulness they put into the rest of us, the gains of the past would be lost and all Smokeover would rush to ruin like an avalanche falling into the abyss.

Every form of our civic activity bears witness to this consciousness of strain which, as we have seen, is the essential stuff of the Smokeover mind. What city can compare with Smokeover in the number of 'Movements' it harbours and promotes, each embodied in an appropriate 'Society,' with Committee, President, Treasurer and Secretary to match? Who that was present will ever forget the crowd of eager faces that gathered in our City Hall, not so long ago, when the Lord Mayor gave his Grand Reception to the Presidents, Treasurers and Secretaries of all the Significant Movements in Smokeover, from the Anglo-Catholic Movement, which his lordship was understood to favour, to the Girl Guide

Movement, of which his daughter was the Leading Spirit? Nay, have we not all heard what happened to the Lady Mayoress: how that public-spirited woman, as the result of shaking hands with that multitude of strenuous personalities, was attacked next day by neuritis in the arm and unable to shake hands with anybody for the rest of his Lordship's tenure of office? Was there ever such a manifestation of 'Movements' since the world began as these of Smokeover, their total revenue equalling that of a small State, and all supported by voluntary contributions—as some of us know to our cost.

And how do these Movements move? Scrutinize them closely and you shall find that not one of them, from the Anti-poverty Movement at this end to the Anti-wealth Movement at that, can move a hair's-breadth in its chosen direction save by overcoming a tendency which moves in the opposite. Not one but betokens a tension in our Smokeover life, a sense of strain in our Smokeover mind. All holding on and pressing forwards as best they can, sometimes it must be confessed against one another, while Ignorance, Stupidity, Selfishness, Cruelty, Vice, Hypocrisy, Disease, Despair and Death, not unaided by the devil and his angels, are pulling with might and main at the other end of the rope. There is something heroic in the mind of Smokeover. Were it not so the enemy would make a swift end of us.

But of all the strains, tensions, contradictions and inner conflicts that make up the mind of Smokeover, the most significant, for the light it throws on the kind of people we are, and on the manifold occupations that engage us, is one of which no men-

tion will be found in the local directories, guide-books, encyclopedia articles or other descriptive account of the Movements in our great city. Not that I can claim to be its first discoverer. In all likelihood I should have remained unaware of its existence, or at least of its significance as the master-strain of the Smokeover mind, had not my attention been called to it by a friend of mine, who had been converted to Buddhism during a long sojourn in the East, and who, in the new illumination gained from that religion, was able to see many things in Smokeover which escape the observation of most of us. It came about in this wise.

One day he and I were walking out together from the centre of the city towards the suburbs, and as we walked our conversation fell on the Struggle for Existence, of which there was much to remind us in the aspect of our surroundings and on the faces of the passers-by. He had been telling me that in some Buddhist city he knew of you might walk among the crowds all day without seeing one degraded or unhappy face, and he was just drawing the contrast with Smokeover when (our walk lying that way) we came in sight of the Cemetery Gates. Here my Buddhist friend came to a half, as though a thought had suddenly struck him.

"What you call the struggle *for existence*," he said, "would be better named 'the struggle *against non-existence*.'"

I asked him to explain.

"I mean," he proceeded, "that the whole life of Smokeover, if reduced to its ground texture, would turn out to be a struggle to keep out of yonder place,

to which the Wheel of Existence is perpetually bearing you." And he pointed towards the Cemetery.

At the words a new light seemed to fall upon Smokeover, and it was as though a thousand 'problems' which had been puzzling me were all being 'solved' at once. But I doubt if the revelation, which was very sudden, would have gone fully home, had not my attention been caught at the same moment by an immense advertisement displayed on a hoarding immediately behind the spot where my Buddhist friend stood pointing. The advertisement represented the figure of a wise and benignant-looking gentleman, evidently a member of the medical profession, with an outstretched hand pointing towards the Cemetery, exactly as my friend was doing. And underneath ran this legend in large letters: *"If you would keep out of yonder place take Dr. Christian's Salts."* Whether it was the strange coincidence of the two attitudes, Dr. Christian's and the Buddhist's, for they were remarkably alike, or the double effect of my friend's words and the legend on the advertisement, I know not; but certain it is that the truth about Smokeover seemed to come upon me in a flash.

"Dr. Christian," my friends went on, "is a profound psychologist, and I know not whether to admire him the more for the depth of his penetration into the mind of Smokeover, or for his skill in exploiting it. He knows that about you which you take endless pains, all of them futile, to conceal from yourselves; for you know it, too, though in a dumb, inarticulate and half-conscious way. He knows that the dominating Movement in Smokeover,

carrying all your other Movements along with it, as a masterful current carries the eddies on its surface, is the *Movement towards the Cemetery*. He knows what none of your spiritual guides have the courage to tell you, if indeed they know it themselves—as some of them at all events clearly do not—that the life of Smokeover is a struggle against non-existence, and that the mind of Smokeover, reduced to its ultimates, is nothing else than a conscious state of tension induced by the pull towards the Cemetery, on the one hand, and your will, on the other, to keep out of the Cemetery as long as you can. Your municipal government, your sanitary department, your sewage system (which they tell me is the best in the world), your hospitals, your philanthropies, your campaigns for improved conditions, your birth-control propaganda (a mean method of cheating the Cemetery), your wage earnings and your profit makings—what are they all in the last analysis but expressions of the determination to keep out of the Cemetery as long as you can, phases in your struggle against non-existence? Why do the poor envy the rich? Because the rich are more favourably placed for resisting the pull of the Cemetery. What is the conflict between Capital and Labour but a quarrel as to which shall be first, and which last, to enter yonder gates? Believe me, Dr. Christian knows you like a book."

"We have a proverb in Smokeover," I said, "that the more you think about the Cemetery, the sooner you will get there."

"I have heard it," he answered, "and a very foolish proverb it is. It shows how difficult you

find it to forget the Cemetery, and it reminds you of the Cemetery, which you would like to forget, every time you repeat the words. I have been told that your churches have adopted the proverb as a kind of motto, and that ministers of religion get dismissed if they dwell too much on the thought of yonder melancholy place. But let me tell you this —the pull-towards-the-Cemetery is what keeps your churches going, yes, even those that pride themselves on being the last thing out in the way of a church, with their empty talk about religion being for life and not for death. Take the Funeral Service out of your prayer-books, and all the rest of your litanies would fall meaningless, and the parsons would find their occupation gone."

My friend and I continued our walk. Leaving the Cemetery behind us we presently found ourselves amid suburban villas with pretty gardens and people playing tennis on the lawns, who, we observed, would often be calling to one another in polite language to throw back the balls which had flown over the intervening fences. After that the gardens grew larger and the balls had more room to fly; and then we came to stately mansions hidden away in park-like grounds, with here and there a board obtruded amid the foliage overhanging the park wall, and bearing the legend 'For Sale.'

"What a contrast between all this," said I, "and the slums we visited this morning."

"The contrast is superficial," replied my Buddhist friend. "That fine mansion yonder, announced 'for sale,' has not fulfilled its promise. It was built as a defence against non-existence and the owner now

finds he must try something else. Or perhaps he is dead."

Again I begged him to explain.

"The struggle for the necessaries of life," he replied, "or, as you call it, the struggle for existence, in spite of its hardships and sufferings, is the most interesting occupation in which human beings can engage. It is also the nursery in which the finer qualities of human nature are developed; and that is why your Christ agrees with our Buddha in blessing the poor. But the struggle for the luxuries of life, which always supervenes when the struggle for necessaries comes to an end, is a mean and stupid affair; much more desolating in the competitions it provokes than the fight for daily bread, but intrinsically uninteresting, tedious and even debasing. The life of the rich is a perpetual effort to keep boredom at arm's length, conducted by methods which themselves bore the user. Now boredom, as you probably know from your own experience, is a stage on the road to non-existence. It means that you are partly *dead,* that your funeral is in sight, that the undertaker is approaching; that your whole being, in short, is feeling the pull towards the Cemetery. What else do you mean when you talk of being bored to *death?*"

"I'm unable to put any other meaning on the words," I said.

"Then what is the difference between the hunger of the poor and the boredom of the rich?"

"Both seem to me," I answered, "to be stages on the road to non-existence."

"That is not the difference but the resemblance.

The difference is that boredom is much nearer the goal than hunger."

We were now returning on our steps and the Cemetery Gates were again in sight. A funeral was just going in. It was evidently the funeral of a great personage, for the procession was a long one, and the Lord Mayor and Corporation were in the leading carriages. We came to a halt under Dr. Christian's advertisement and stood with uncovered heads while the bier, laden with roses, lilies and orchids, passed by.

We walked on towards the centre of the City, exchanging a word now and then. Presently it began to rain heavily and we put up our umbrellas, my friend disliking the electric trams, now filled to overflowing. As we entered the more densely populated regions the atmosphere grew dark, though the day was still young; lights began to appear in the shop windows and rivers of liquid mud were flowing down the gutters by the sidewalks.

In a certain long street, overlooked on one side by the slums of Shady Hill and bordered on the other by railway coal-yards, we came to a halt. Our attention had been caught by a large stone-built Nonconformist chapel, deeply blackened by the smoke of the city, with an ostentatious portico in the debased classic style of 1820. A disused graveyard extended for some distance at the back. On the street front, affixed to the iron railings, was a board announcing that the site and building were for sale. Evidently the place had been closed for some time. A few of the dirty windows were broken, and the space inside the railings was littered with paper

blown in from the street, while tin cans, bottles, battered buckets, old boots, sordid fragments of women's finery, and other debris lay plentifully scattered on the flat tombstones at the back of the chapel. A more dismal object than this place of worship, as it appeared in the pouring rain and gathering gloom, I have never seen.

"It's *dead*," said my Buddhist friend.

"Yes," I answered. "But the corpse is valuable. I warrant you the trustees are holding out for fifty thousand. Land in this part of Smokeover is not given away. Look at the size of that graveyard with the railway sidings just beyond."

"It's dead all the same," remarked my friend.

"I wonder what it died of?" I asked.

"Of self-consciousness," answered the Buddhist.

Once more I had to press for an explanation.

"In the Eastern city I was telling you about," he said, "religion goes on like the circulation of the blood, without the people being aware how religious they are, or even knowing that religion is what supports their lives. They seldom use the word, and perhaps you remember that Christ never did. There, religion makes a man like other men. But, here, it makes him different from other men. He becomes painfully conscious that he is religious, in contrast to the mass of his irreligious neighbours, and that naturally prompts him to justify his position, to present some kind of *apologia pro vita sua*, thereby turning his religion into a problem, which he has to solve for the satisfaction of others, and perhaps for his own as well. If you produce a saint in Smokeover you do your best to spoil him by pointing him

out as public curiosity, and by calling him 'our saintly Mr. So-and-so' in your religious newspapers. So, what with his own sense of isolation, and your constantly reminding him of it, the man becomes a puzzle to himself and begins to wonder if he can hold on. Your churches in like manner live in constant apprehension about their future; and it eats into their life like a canker. That is what has happened to this poor place. It died of the efforts it made to keep itself alive, like a man who shortens his life by giving too much attention to his health, killed by the force of his desire to live. And the same fate is in store for all the churches and chapels of Smokeover—even to the one that the trustees will build in the suburbs when they have sold their site to the railway for fifty thousand—unless they become converted."

"Converted to what?" I asked.

Instead of answering he pointed to the notice board of the derelict chapel, the lettering of which was hardly legible under the accumulated dirt.

"As far as I can make out," he said, "that chapel seems to have belonged to an enterprising denomination."

I stared hard at the notice board. But the Buddhist's eyes were better than mine and the light was so dim that I could not read the name of the denomination. Nor did I inquire what it was, my mind at the moment being unconcerned with denominational differences. The only words that I could make out on the board were "All welcome."

We turned away from the melancholy scene and pursued our way. Not another word was spoken

till I said farewell to my Buddhist friend at the crowded station. In spite of our umbrellas we were both wet through. For the rain had been violent and the wind would blow it upon us from a new direction every time we turned a street corner.

From Smokeover Cemetery the mind passes, with an easy transition, to the slums. Viewed from the inside the two Institutions have much in common. Decay is the industry of both: the decay of men's bodies in the one, the decay of their homes in the other; but since a man's body is a kind of home and his home a kind of extended body, that difference does not amount to very much. Indeed our local poet, who has a turn for rather violent imagery, has described the Cemetery, in one of his *Ballads of Smokeover*, as "the Slum of the Dead." To complete the figure he might have added that the slums are "the Cemetery of the Living." It is certain that in the more congested districts of our City many of the inhabitants suffer what is tantamount to premature burial, and people with a delicate sense of hearing will tell you they often hear these poor souls knocking inside their tenement coffins and calling piteously for deliverance. "Don't talk to me of dying," said an aged slum dweller to one of our clergy who was visiting him on his death-bed, "don't talk to me about dying, sir. I have been dead and buried these forty years." From which testimony it would appear that Slums and Cemetery are closely akin. The main difference seems to be that whereas there is a strong movement among us for the abolition of the slums, nobody dreams of abolishing the

Cemetery—save, perhaps, the shareholders of our new Crematorium Company, Limited.

The slums of Smokeover were made, not born. That is to say, they began their visible existence not as slums but as something better. Most of them, to begin with, were decent neighbourhoods where families of human beings might live in tolerable comfort and self-respect, one family to a house. Even the worst of them have seen better days. Some were the pride of those who built them and of those who lived in them. There are tenements in Smokeover, with a family in each room, which were once the mansions of the rich; and there are miles of streets, in the slum or semi-slum condition, once inhabited by the well-to-do middle class, where, within the memory of living men, the stone steps on which bedraggled women now foregather to nurse their babies and to gossip were scrubbed by the housemaid every morning. What wonder, then, that our local pessimists, of whom we have many, taking their walks abroad in our Smokeover suburbs, where the jerry-builder has set up his kingdom, cast up ashes upon their heads and lament saying, "Behold, the slums of the future! Were not the slums we have just passed through, suburbs once? And the suburbs we have now arrived at—will not they, too, in the fullness of time, become slums?"

There is a law in the affairs of Smokeover which one of our Housing Experts has formulated as follows: *When once a Smokeover suburb has started on the downward path that leads to the slum condition, the rate of acceleration increases proportionately to the time.* At first, says our Expert, the

movement is so slow that it cannot be detected even by the measuring instruments of science, to say nothing of human sense. At that stage the houses may have home farms attached to them and a day among the pheasants be not impossible. You are at peace in your rural seclusion and there is nothing to indicate what fate has in store for you. The worst the pessimists can then say to you is that Smokeover has drawn a little nearer, creeping stealthily in your direction. But what of that? Are there not still miles of pleasant country between your lodge gates and the furthest outposts of the city? Are not the kine lowing on your home farm and the pheasants calling to one another in your coverts?

So off you go, with your wife, for a trip round the world, nothing doubting. You see the Grand Canyon, and the Bay of San Francisco, and Honolulu, and Sydney Harbour, and the Himalayas, and Table Mountain, and the Peak of Tenerife. "All very wonderful," you say, "but the view from our garden terrace is better"; and a slight pressure on your arm indicates the assent of your homesick wife.

A year has elapsed and you are back again on your garden terrace. All as it was, thank God! But no, not quite. What is that tall, slender, red thing away yonder in the middle distance, with a faint cloud issuing from its upper end? A factory chimney! Bring the field-glass and let us make sure. Yes, a factory chimney, with streets of small houses visibly sprawling round the base. Smokeover has taken one of her mighty leaps and landed not more than three miles from our garden terrace! And what is this that we hear—of a Bill before Parlia-

ment to extend the municipal boundaries, and of a vast Circular System of electric trams, devised by the prescient mind of our City Engineer, giving access from the centre to every point of the circumference and providing for the needs of a future population of four millions—and a new Smokeover Loan for six millions already on the market, issue price 95 and interest at 4½ per cent.? All true and, what is more, the New Road (after business done between us and the Corporation) will cut clean through the middle of our Home Farm and the trams go snarling and rattling past our lodge gates.

But the worst has yet to come. The demon of mass production, looking out for opportunities, has found a willing listener in the owner of the neighbouring estate. The All-In Motor Company has bought that estate, and presently you shall see a square mile or two of its smiling pastures solidly covered with the Company's 'Works,' rivalling those of Mr. Henry Ford. Good-bye now to your home farm and your pheasants, to your orchid-houses and your conservatories! Your cowmen, your ploughmen, your carters, your gardeners, your keepers have all streamed over the way, preferring—for human nature is so made—to be cogs on the wheel at seven pounds a week to the "wholesome occupation" you can offer them at half the wage. Your cooks and your housemaids have followed; there is not a woman servant to be had for miles round, and your poor wife, with the Prime Minister to be entertained next month, is at her wits' end. What will you do? You will sell out, and that not unprofitably. You will divide your estate into lots convenient to the pur-

chaser. Whereupon the jerry-builder, with all the powers of darkness at his heels, will march in and take possession. And the All-In Company will be greatly obliged to him, and he to the All-In Company.

Such is the first stage in the Rise and Development of a Slum; the rest follows in a century or, it may be, in a generation; *facilis descensus Averni.* Every slum in Smokeover began thus or thus-like. What means it, think you, that the very worst of them, where the police go in pairs and the district visitor wears overalls (to be put in an oven on returning home), still bears the name of *Shady Hill?* And note further. Round the foot of Shady Hill there once ran a pleasant little river; a sweating, steaming rookery named Brook Street commemorates its former meanderings. The brook itself has totally disappeared; no man rightly knows what has become of it, save the City Engineer, and perhaps not even he. Some say it is usefully employed in flushing a sewer. Time was when gay riders went a-hawking on its banks and when the kine lowed and the pheasants called to one another on Shady Hill.

These transformations have been, and who would say there are to be no more. "There cannot be a doubt," so runs the last paragraph but one in our Expert's Report, "that in much of the work done under the last Housing Scheme we have been spending public money in creating the slums of the future." And the Report concludes with the following remarkable piece of civic psychology: "The natural tendency of Smokeover, in common with all great cities, is towards the slum condition. To counter this

tendency, even to the extent of maintaining the *status quo*, demands unceasing effort from all classes of the citizens, and the effort must be doubled if advance is to be made to a better state of things."

Never was the mind of Smokeover more faithfully described. Once more we see the spiritual Smokeover, which aims at the New Jerusalem, engaged in a tug-of-war with the natural Smokeover, which gravitates towards the slums; the law of our civic mind warring against the law of our civic members; and between the two a tension created, of which every soul in Smokeover is conscious, more or less.

Thus, to the tension that arises between the pull-towards-the-Cemetery and the determination to keep out of it as long as possible, there is added this further tension of resisting the pull-towards-the-slums. Or is it the same tension with the terms of it transposed—in the one case, the natural Smokeover resisting the pull-towards-the-Cemetery, which is the Slum of the Dead; in the other, the spiritual Smokeover resisting the pull-towards-the-slums, which are the Cemetery of the Living? In either case, who can wonder that the mind of Smokeover is a mind *in tension*, hard put to it to keep what it has already won, and yet straining to win something better, while the smoke of the effort rises up to heaven and hangs over the city in a perpetual cloud.

CHAPTER TWO

The Bumford Angel

OF all the unsightly monuments in Smokeover Cemetery, and there are thousands of them, I give the place of evil eminence to that erected in memory of the late Alderman Bumford, Chairman of the Smokeover Education Committee. It consists, as to the main design, of a colossal angel in marble, apparently of the female denomination, leaning over the tomb and holding forth a gilt crown, which Widow Bumford has regilded every year on the anniversary of her good man's death. The artist evidently intends us to suppose that the angel is holding the crown in readiness to pop it on the Alderman's bald head the moment he emerges from the tomb on the Judgment Day—a proceeding which every system of theology would condemn as premature, whatever the Bumford family may think to the contrary. But the artist has expressed the idea most infelicitously; for the attitude of the angel is such that one runs forward instinctively to save her from falling on her nose, and is only reassured on observing that a concealed iron stay has been let into the middle of her back and that her feet are solidly cemented into the base. Even so one feels hardly safe under the immense spread of the angel's wings, which seem to have been designed for the purpose

of precipitating her fall and overwhelming the resting-place of the Alderman with an avalanche of broken marble.

Under the outstretched wings of this ineffectual angel there is room enough to provide sitting or even standing accommodation for any two persons who may be in need of a refuge, though this can hardly have been intended by the artist, and is much resented, I am told, by members of the Bumford family, especially when the refugees smoke cigarettes and throw the ends on the Alderman's tomb. I have myself used the space for shelter when overtaken by a shower, and found it better than nothing, but far from rainproof. I have also heard that lovers are sometimes to be seen there, one on either side, perhaps attracted by the idea of carrying on their courtship beneath an angel's wings; but this is hard to believe, since the massive legs of the angel intervene between the two niches—unless, indeed, we suppose that the lovers have quarrelled or that the courtship is at the stage of barest incipiency.

Though the Bumford Angel is the title of this chapter, I doubt if it can be reckoned the proper subject of it. But as travellers setting forth on a voyage, if they are free men, and not prisoners of war, deported aliens or suchlike unfortunates, must needs be notified in advance of the port where the voyage is to end, so I, at the start of our present adventure, hand the reader his ticket plainly stamped with "The Bumford Angel" on the face of it. Patience exercised, we shall get to the Bumford Angel in time, and, when we do, the reader will remember that I

told him we should. Let the anchor, then, be weighed, for I have a tale to tell.

After the death at the age of seventy-two of Professor George Morton, the eminent bacteriologist of Smokeover University, his excellent housekeeper, Margaret Simmons, came into our service as cook. People congratulated us on our good fortune, for competent servants, in those days as in these, were hard to find, and Margaret was one of the best. She came to us, she said, because she could never live with anybody who was not a friend of Professor Morton; and that I had been.

If Margaret had a fault it was the habit of comparing her new employers a little unfavourably with Professor Morton. Was dinner ten minutes late? She would say "Professor Morton *liked* it ten minutes late." Were the eggs at breakfast overboiled? She would say "Professor Morton would never have complained of *that*." Was the kitchen range out of order? She would say "Professor Morton never allowed *his* range to get into *that* condition." Was the postman behind-hand in delivering the letters? She would say, "the postman was always punctual at Professor Morton's. He insisted on it." Was the butcher's boy inclined to be impertinent? She would say "at Professor Morton's all the tradespeople were most polite." Did the milk go sour? She would say "at Professor Morton's the milk would keep in the hottest weather for twenty-four hours."

It was a great calamity to our household, and one we have never been able to repair, when Margaret,

whom we all had learned to love, left us to join her only son, a prosperous shipping agent in an Australian port; and I think some of us were moved to tears when, a few days ago, we heard that she had died, a week after her arrival in Australia. She was a heroine after her kind.

Now it so happened that a year or two before she left us there appeared an extensive biography of Professor Morton, written by one of his colleagues. Of course I procured a copy for Margaret or perhaps lent her mine—I forgot which. But the print being small and Margaret's eyes not good, she was unable to read it, and accordingly Annie, the housemaid, a good-natured girl, undertook to read it aloud to her. Every night as I passed the door of the servants' hall I would hear Annie steadily plodding through her task and Margaret exclaiming from time to time "beautiful, beautiful! Just like him." Even the long chapters on "Morton's contributions to Bacteriology" found the brave Annie undaunted and Margaret still exclaiming "beautiful, beautiful!" From time to time I would ask her how she liked the book, and the answer was always to the same effect, "Beautiful, sir, just like him. You see I knew him so well. And I nursed him in his last illness. And he used to tell me things he told to nobody else, because he had nobody else to tell them to. No wife, no child, sir. Such a pity, I always thought it, and he so kind a gentleman. And such a fine-looking man!"

The reading continued for several months, only a few pages being taken at a time. All went well until the concluding chapter was reached. In this

chapter the writer gives a short account of Morton's death and the illness that led up to it. Professor Morton, said the writer, had died of rheumatic fever, the result of getting wet through while attending the funeral of a friend in Smokeover Cemetery.

That night I was in my study marking examination papers when there came a gentle tap at the door. It was past midnight, and the rest of the household was supposed to be in bed. Somewhat startled I said "Come in." Whereupon the door opened very slowly and in came Margaret. She was wrapped in a dressing-gown, and carried a hand-towel, with which she would dry the tears that were streaming down her face.

"Oh, sir," she said between her sobs, "I couldn't sleep. I had to get up and come and tell you. The book's all wrong. But only the last chapter, sir. *They* don't know. I'm the only one that knows, because I saw them both and he told me all about it afterwards. He didn't catch his cold attending a funeral. He caught it quite another way, sir. And they *both* caught their deaths together, sir. I *saw* them. It was me that *found* them, sir. He asked me to tell nobody; but now they've got it all wrong in the book, and somebody ought to put it right. It isn't fair that they should tell lies about such a noble gentleman now that he's dead. And the other one dead, too, poor creature. And him with no wife nor child to tell the truth, and me the only one that knows. Oh, sir, do tell me what I ought to do."

"Sit down on the sofa, Margaret," I said, "and tell me all about it. Professor Morton was a very dear friend of mine, and I don't think you will do

wrong in telling me. And perhaps I may be able to set the matter right."

So the good creature sat down on the sofa, and began her tale. The clock had struck three before it was finished. I was late for the examiners' meeting next day, and I am not sure that perfect justice was done to my batch of the candidates. For Margaret's tale had moved me greatly.

She had not spoken a dozen sentences before she again broke down and began ejaculating reproaches against the biographer for the errors of his concluding chapter. I had to bethink me of means to calm her, and oddly enough the image of a monkey suddenly rose to mind.

"Now, Margaret," said I, keeping the monkey up my sleeve for a moment, "let me tell you what I remember of Professor Morton's death, and you shall correct me if I make any mistakes. To begin with, it happened shortly after a funeral in Smokeover Cemetery, and the person who was buried was Dr. Hopkinson, the eye-specialist, whose house was opposite St. Philip's Church."

"And used to keep a big monkey in his back garden, sir," said Margaret quickly.

"Which killed Miss Nettleship's Persian cat from next door," I added.

"And a pretty rumpus there was about that," said Margaret in a voice now quite normal.

"Yes. Well, the funeral——"

"And you remember, sir, how the cat was killed the day before Dr. Hopkinson was going to operate on Miss Nettleship for cataract, and how the operation had to be put off."

"Yes. Well, the funeral was Dr. Hopkinson's and it was what they call a 'Positivist' ceremony. He and Professor Morton were both Positivists."

"They were, sir. And I used to say, and still say, that there can't be much wrong with the Positivists since Professor Morton was one of them."

"And I say the same.—The funeral took place in the afternoon; I remember that because I was there; and Professor Morton gave an address at the grave-side, in the middle of which he broke down and had to be led away."

"He did, sir. And it was *me* that led him away, because he had neither wife nor child to do it and him over seventy at the time. But *why* did he break down, sir? And *why* had I to lead him away? That's one of the things the people who wrote the book about him didn't know. They thought it had to do with Dr. Hopkinson. But it had to do with somebody quite different, sir." And here she again burst into tears.

"Tell me about that afterwards, Margaret, and let me say what I remember. While the funeral was going on it began to rain heavily and——"

"No, it didn't sir!" interrupted Margaret, "that's where the book goes wrong again. The rain didn't come on till the funeral was long over and I was giving the Professor a cup of tea in his study."

"But Professor Morton got wet through."

"Ah, but *not then!* It was after five o'clock when the master got wet through."

"Well, my memory may be playing me a bit false about the rain. Anyhow, Margaret, he got wet sometime that afternoon."

"*Evening* rather," interrupted Margaret.

"And contracted a bad chill which developed into the rheumatic fever from which he died."

"Yes, *that* part is all true," said Margaret. "But, oh sir, to think you know nothing of *the other one* who caught a chill at the same time! And to think that the book knows nothing, and it pretending to tell the story of his life. And yet I can't blame the poor gentleman who wrote it. For there's nobody but me that knows, because the master asked me to keep it to myself. But now I'm going to tell *you*, sir, because if I was to die with people thinking it was only a common chill that took the master off I shouldn't have the courage to face my Maker. And *that other one*, too, sir! His heart was broken, sir; and so was that other one's; and that's why both of them died—and nobody knows anything about it but me. But it's a long story, sir. And you so busy at examination time. And me with breakfast for ten to be ready at a quarter to eight. And half-past twelve already. I'd better go back to bed, though I shall not sleep a wink."

"No, Margaret," I said, "you must tell me now, and never mind if breakfast is late just for once."

I had still some time to wait before the woman could get fairly started, the sobs constantly choking her efforts to begin. But once under way she went ahead rapidly and told her story with a flowing consecutiveness that would have done credit to any biographer. I wish I could here produce it word for word.

But if I were to do that the reader would miss the context and be bewildered for want of it. What

Margaret told me was only one strand in the story of George Morton's life. I must therefore tell the tale in my own way and Margaret shall come in when she is needed.

George Morton was born of humble parentage in the manufacturing town of Everstrike, a large place, where articles of many kinds are made by mass production, a river polluted in the making of them (the manufacturers administering the Act which forbids the pollution), and considerable ill feeling engendered over the distribution of the proceeds. Everstrike is situated nine miles to the north-west of Smokeover, and connected with it by an almost continuous mass of slums and by an excellent service of electric cars, from the top of which the traveller may survey the slums at his leisure. To the eye of such an observer the two places form one city, though the municipal government and the sewage systems (both invisible from the top of the cars) are quite independent. Smokeover and Everstrike are twins.

George's father was a "baker and confectioner," carrying on a small business in the district now traversed by the electric cars. As soon as George was big enough to carry a heavily-loaded basket he was taken from school, taught to bake, and employed in delivering bread at the customers' houses. When he was fifteen his father died, and his mother was left to carry on the business, which now began to dwindle, and the family became miserably poor. Still the shop managed to keep open, the mother and the two girls making the cakes and the confectionery,

while George, who was a clever boy and very deft in the use of his hands, mixed the dough, baked the bread and delivered it as before to the customers. It was a desperate fight, for all of them, to keep their heads above water.

An example of the state these poor people lived in—and it led, as we shall see, to important issues—I heard from Morton himself after his discoveries in bacteriology had spread his name over half the world. He would often talk to me of his early struggle with poverty, and he told me, among other things, that when he was a boy he suffered martyrdom from toothache. But they had no money to pay a dentist and George had to bear the agony as best he could, with no better aids from science that a penny-worth of some burning stuff from the chemist's that he used to put on the tortured nerves, or a plaster of sliced onions and cayenne pepper applied to his swollen cheek as a counter-irritant. Once when we were visiting his birthplace together he took me to the old shop (there is now a tablet commemorating him on the front) and showed me the very spot where he used to bang his head, in the paroxysms of his pain, on the hot walls of the bake-house. He told me at the same time that the bake-house had witnessed the birth of his interest in bacteriology. "I began," he said, "by experimenting with the yeast that I used in making the bread. It was here," he went on (he was leaning against the wall on which he had once banged his head), "that I became wedded to science, and it was here that I learnt my first lesson in the endurance of pain. I bang my head no more."

He said also that at one time the intolerable pain drove him to the verge of suicide, and pointed out the hook, still in the ceiling of the bakehouse, on which he rigged up a rope for the purpose, but was always prevented at the last moment by the fear of going to hell,—a department of the universe in which George was then an ardent believer (he gave it up afterwards), and where he was sure he would be tormented with infinitely intensified toothache as a special punishment for attempting to escape from that malady by taking his own life, as well as roasted alive for his sins in general, through thousands of millions of years. "So," said he, "I gave it up, and cut my rope into halves, out of which I made a sort of sling for carrying the bread basket on my back—and a very pretty contrivance that was."

It was in the midst of these untoward circumstances, high piled obstructions and premature conditions that George Morton, now aged sixteen, for the first and only time in his life fell frantically and desperately in love—a rash and unpermitted adventure for one so beset with contradictions, and not less so when we consider that the object of his passion was a daughter of the aristocracy. It came about in this wise.

Among the inhabitants of Everstrike whose daily bread was furnished by George's ministrations, the most important, both in respect to the quantity of bread consumed and the quality of the consumer, was the Vicar of the Parish Church, who was no less a personage than the Reverend Lord William Augustus Penderghoste. By common consent he was the best vicar that had ever reigned in Ever-

strike, so far at least as the memory of the oldest inhabitant could bear witness, whether you judged him by the sermons preached in the church or by the munificence practised in the vicarage. He kept up considerable state, and the number of loaves required to feed his household, together with the Madeira cakes, jam rolls, Bath buns and other confectionery consumed by the younger members of the family, was not far short of half the total output of the Morton establishment.

That tottering commercial enterprise would unquestionably have collapsed had the Penderghoste custom been withdrawn; which calamity once nearly happened. For among the minor ills to which George was exposed in this portion of his pilgrimage was that of frequent burns in the manipulation of his oven, an experience which gave him a vivid foretaste of what it would mean to be roasted alive to all eternity. This, on a certain occasion, had happened so severely that each of the five fingers of George's right hand had to be swathed in a bandage soaked in camphorated oil and other tasty medicaments, the whole being enclosed in the fingers of an old glove—a combination known in the vernacular of Everstrike as a 'hottle.' How the poor boy managed in that predicament to knead his dough God (who observes such things) knows; he did it somehow; but unfortunately during the process one of the hottles came off in the sticky stuff, and was discovered next morning at breakfast by the Reverend Lord William in the middle of a loaf of bread. The Penderghostes immediately decided to change their baker, and this most assuredly would have happened

but for the personal intercessions of Mrs. Morton (who explained the circumstances in detail) and the general kindness of Lord William's heart.

Every morning punctually at nine o'clock the future bacteriologist might have been seen trudging up the drive, lined with sooty rhododendrons, that led to the vicarage, his basket piled high with warm loaves and slung to his shoulders by the rope with which he had intended to hang himself. But that was not all. About the same hour, had you been at the front door of the vicarage, you would have seen another vision more attractive but not more significant, that namely of a very lovely young girl of fifteen summers, with violet eyes and a long plait of hair down her back, taking the reins of a pair of ponies from a groom in livery, who would instantly mount behind her, while she, turning her head, would throw a good-bye kiss to the Reverend Lord William, smiling paternally at the study window. This was Lady Gwendoline Penderghoste, the vicar's youngest daughter, as she was wont to set forth every morning to receive her instructions and accomplishments at Miss Hobson's expensive Academy for the Daughters of Gentlemen.

Presently the two visions would pass one another in the vicarage drive; whereupon George would look up from beneath his basket, which he carried high on his shoulders, and the young lady at the same instant would look down from her high seat above the ponies. For George, I must tell you, was a remarkably good-looking boy, and always put on his Sunday suit to go to the vicarage—why, his mother couldn't imagine.

"Ha, ha!" George would inwardly murmur when the Vision had passed him, "Ha, ha! *She eats my bread!* She had some for her breakfast. She'll have some more for her tea. My bread helps her to grow up. My bread keeps her pretty eyes shining, and stunners they are! If she was to stop eating my bread she'd *die.* She mustn't stop eating it. She must like the taste of it. She must say to her mamma, 'Mamma, give me another slice of that nice new bread that Georgie Morton bakes.' Oh, I hope she didn't see my hottle. I mustn't let that happen again! And there was a cockroach got into the dough last night. I'm glad I saw it. I'll trap 'em. That last trap don't work. I must invent a new one."

It was in this wise that George fell frantically and desperately in love with a daughter of the aristocracy, thereby incurring a new variety of pain, compared to which the burnt hand and the throbbing abscess were light afflictions, a pain at once celestial and infernal, which neither camphorated oil could assuage nor sliced onion and cayenne pepper reduce by counter irritation, but which, all the same, he would gladly have endured to endless eternity, whether in heaven or in hell. Has not the poet said—

"Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine"?

Whether, or how far, the passion was reciprocated by the high-born damsel, is a point on which decisive evidence does not exist. It is certain that with two small exceptions to be noted presently their

youthful intercourse never passed beyond the barely incipient stage I have described. It is also known that at some period of her life Lady Gwen, who afterwards won eminence as a figure painter, executed that very beautiful head of "George Morton as a boy" which appears in the first volume of his published biography and is there put down as "drawn from memory," but without the name of the artist being given. An art critic whom I have consulted on the point assures me that the drawing, though beautiful, lacks the finish of Lady Gwen's later work, and Margaret, my late excellent cook, who was not an art critic but only a wise woman, also put it down to an early period. "She'd had it on a table by her bedside for years," said Margaret. But I must leave the reader to form his own opinion, from the sequel, as to the date of the drawing, and hasten on to what remains to be told of that youthful affair. It is singularly little.

George, as I have said, was a remarkably handsome boy, with a head that would have served for a model of the young Apollo's, and a high colouring which the hot air of the bake-house had hardly dimmed. He probably knew it, subtly conscious, we may be sure, of an equality with the young goddess in that particular, which made the difference of rank that existed between them as dust in the balance. For what philosopher will deny that loveliness can never be outvoted, that when all other inequalities between man and man have been done away, whether by Act of Parliament or Revolutionary Decree, the aristocracy of Beauty will sit unshaken on its throne—that the beautiful will still carry fortunes in their

faces, which no system of equitable distribution can make common property, and still bequeath them, unimpaired by Death Duties, to their begotten heirs, both boys and girls? To this aristocracy of the beautiful, with its unassailable prerogatives and powers, George unquestionably belonged; nor did he forget his birthright within it, baker's boy though he was, and modest as the dawn.

All the greater, then, would his humiliation be when, as often happened, the toothache swelled his face to the dimensions of a lop-sided pumpkin, or bunged up one or other of his well-set, deep blue eyes—and it had a way of bunging them up alternately and sometimes both together. We are about to witness him in these conditions.

We see him, one morning, toiling up the vicarage drive, exhausted by a long night of agony and sleeplessness, and hardly able to stand under his heavy load. His face is swollen enormously, his mouth twisted to one side of it, his right eye invisible, the skin of his cheek peeling off under the action of cayenne pepper, and worse than all, in the hurry and misery of getting ready he has forgotten to put on his Sunday suit and is covered with flour and dust. He hears a patter of ponies' feet, he sees the Heavenly Vision approaching, and, wishing he had hanged himself after all, turns round and half buries himself in a sooty rhododendron with blood-red flowers that grew by the edge of the drive.

The pattering feet sound nearer and nearer and then—great heavens!—suddenly stop exactly opposite the sooty rhododendron. And a sweet young

voice calls out, "Oh, you poor boy, what *is* the matter with your face?"

George slowly turns round and reveals his disfigured countenance, which the rhododendron had only half concealed.

"Oh!" says the sweet young voice, as the light of day falls on the marred features of George; and the 'Oh!' is repeated three times.

"I've got the toothache," says George, speaking with difficulty in a voice that seemed to come from the side of his head, "and I've got it bad."

"But why don't you go to the dentist?"

"Dentists cost money," says George. "We're poor."

"I shall tell father about it," says the young lady, "as soon as I get home at one o'clock. No, I'll go back and tell him now." And she turns the ponies round.

George had expected that she would laugh at his ugly face. Nay, he had feared it with a deadly fear. But she laughed not. She bit her under lip; tears welled up in her beautiful eyes and George saw them rolling down.

A moment later she stopped again and looked back. George, bending under his load, had stepped out into the drive and was coming slowly on. "Jump down, Perkins," she said to the groom, "and have that boy's basket off his back. We'll take it to the house." And the basket was hoisted into the carriage.

George said "thank you," first to the lady and then to the groom, and was turning to go home when he bethought him of the empty basket to be brought

back. A few minutes later the vicarage cook gave it to him, and then handed him a sovereign. "That's from his lordship," she said. "You are to go to the dentist immediately, and have your tooth pulled."

Not many hours afterwards George was in the dentist's chair and the dentist was looking into his mouth.

"There are four to be extracted without delay," he said.

"How much will it cost?" asked George.

"An extraction with gas costs two guineas, but I will take the lot out without gas for one. Only not all at once."

"I can stand a lot of pain," said George. "I'm used to it. Pull them all now."

The dentist meditated. "H'm," he said, "a bit risky. However, you seem a plucky lad, so here goes!" And the forceps got to work.

George went through the ordeal without uttering a cry. But the shock was great and when all was over the dentist had to fan his face with a newspaper, assuring him meanwhile that he had never operated on a pluckier boy. He, too, seemed out of breath.

Rejecting the dentist's advice "to take a cab," for the simple reason that his last shilling had been paid to the dentist, George walked home, reaching his bakehouse about six o'clock in a very shattered, muddleheaded and generally deplorable condition. There was much to be done in preparation for the morning's delivery of bread, though his mother and sisters had forwarded the work as best they could

during his absence. They were still on the spot to render assistance, but George, over-rating his powers, assured them that he could manage, and they went off to their other duties. In spite of his miseries he felt rather pleased with himself, not to say proud. "I'm glad I had 'em all out. I shall look all right in my Sunday clothes to-morrow morning." So ran the tenor of his thoughts. And putting his hand to his sore face he perceived that the swelling was rapidly going down.

For some time George stood manfully to his task, though not without moments of misgiving. The bread must be baked at all costs; for there was One to eat it whom he knew of! Being a religious boy, he earnestly prayed to God to help him through, putting up the prayer intermittently as he moved about in the hot bakehouse, and sometimes forgetting to finish the sentences. But now and then a fit of dizziness would come on, so that he had much ado to keep his wits about him and avoid disasters. This caused him to think that God was not listening to his prayers. Then it occurred to him that he might get better results if he went down on his knees and made his petitions in proper form. So down he went beside a sack of flour; but no sooner was he in that position than the dizziness came on worse than ever and he promptly rose to his feet with the prayer unsaid. And I have to record that a spasm of atheism shot through his young mind.

However, in spite of these spiritual disappointments, he managed to get a goodly batch of quartern loaves ready to be carried to the oven, all fairly spaced out on a large tray or sheet of iron

used for that purpose. This in due course he lifted up and balanced on his head, as his father had taught him to do. Staggering forward under the load he had not made more than a couple of paces when he felt his legs giving way beneath him and, catching his foot on some obstruction, down he fell, struck his forehead on the sharp edge of the tray and received a long jagged cut over the right eyebrow. Stung by the pain he managed to regain his feet for an instant, the blood pouring over his face, then reeled sideways and collapsed in a dead faint.

The dough trough, in which there was a mass of dough still awaiting manipulation, ran along the wall of the bakehouse. Judging by what happened afterwards there can be no doubt that George fell over this trough. He fell, it would seem, with the upper part of his body inside and the lower out. In that half-suspended position he must have remained some minutes and afterwards rolled bodily on to the floor. When he recovered consciousness he was lying close beside the trough, face upwards.

How George, after a set-back so grievous, succeeded in finishing the night's work is a mystery, to be explained only by a more intimate acquaintance with the psychology of heroes than most of us can claim to possess; unless, indeed, we fall back on the theory that George's prayers, in spite of their fragmentary and unceremonious character, had been answered after all. But finish he did, though not perhaps in complete concordance with the highest standards of bakehouse efficiency. It was not until the last loaf had been put in the oven and the fires

properly stoked that George, with a face as white as his floury jacket, and a gory handkerchief tied round his head, presented himself, candle in hand, by the bed-side of his horrified mother and asked where she kept the diachylon plaster.

Many years afterwards, when Morton had turned Positivist, he would tell me—mentioning it as an interesting physiological phenomenon—that he believed his accident that night had saved the situation; that he felt much better after it; that he turned dizzy no more; that he finished his work in a kind of exaltation and slept the sleep of the just on turning into bed. But, for my part, I have never accepted that physiological explanation.

Anyhow, he slept the sleep of the just or, perhaps, of the exhausted, and was off on his rounds next morning, dressed in his Sunday clothes, at the usual hour—believe it or disbelieve it as you choose! And punctually to the moment he was on the spot when the Heavenly Vision was wont to pass by. Was it not for the sake of that moment and in the hope of its coming that George had stood up so manfully to these reverses of fortune and endured so many tribulations by the way? I tell you it was; and George was not the boy to miss the crown he had fought for.

The sooty rhododendron still stood where it did, but George no longer sought its concealments. His face had returned to its normal dimensions, and was there not a mark on his forehead of which any hero might be proud—a patch of diachylon plaster cut in strips and laid crosswise, large as the palm of your hand—for George had a wide brow—and under-

neath it an honourable wound received on active service? George showed his face like a man.

"I've had them out," said he, for the Vision had again stopped in front of him. "I've had them out. Four of them, and all at a go! And all without gas."

"Well done!" answered the Vision. "It must have hurt. But what have you done to your forehead?"

"Cut it."

"And how did you cut it?"

"Baking the bread," answered George, for the Moment was now come—the Moment when high-born beauty was to learn what kind of stuff a baker's boy could be made of. "I fell in the bakehouse. But I baked the bread. And here it is in my basket."

"You brave boy!" cried the Vision. "Why, you're a hero!" And away went the pony carriage and passed out of sight.

The words were few, but no words, however many, could describe the exquisite joy of George Morton as he heard them. Had they been spoken to him by anyone else, by his minister, by his teacher at the Sunday School, by the dentist, nay, even by his mother, they would have left him cold. But spoken by *her* they set his whole being on fire, they opened his vision to illimitable horizons, they sent him whistling back to his hot bakehouse, the most victorious baker's boy in the wide universe. His spiritual conversion, which the minister had been seeking to bring about by operating on quite other lines, dates from that moment. "Now," said he to himself, "I can burn my fingers without crying out.

For I'm a brave boy, and *she* knows it." Had he then been as well versed in Shakespeare as he afterwards became doubtless he would have quoted the lines:

"She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them."

But the lot of man is precarious, his pilgrimage is beset by ambushed enemies, and the hour of his greatest triumph, as many wise men have warned us, is often the beginning of his downfall. Alas, it was so with George. Already a handbreadth of a cloud was gathering on the horizon, and not many hours after his triumphant return to the bakehouse the heavens grew black, the great deeps were opened, the floods came, and the House of Morton, "Baker and Confectioner," with all the jam tarts, Fry's chocolates, sausage rolls, house flies, fly-papers and predatory wasps, displayed in the window, together with the two printed cards "Teas Provided" and "Wedding Cakes to Order," fell with a crash into everlasting ruin.

It is now four o'clock in the afternoon of that tragic day. George is in the bakehouse setting a new trap for cockroaches, which he has just invented, aware of himself as "a brave boy," and whistling victoriously.

But a very different scene is being enacted in the front shop. Before the counter stands a furious woman, shaking her fist in Mrs. Morton's face, and apparently using abominable language. Alas, the language is no metaphor. For on the counter stands

a cut loaf, slightly encrimsoned on the outer surface and showing confirmatory signs towards the interior. To these the woman is significantly pointing with her left hand, while she employs the right as aforesaid in threatening Mrs. Morton with personal violence.

Other furious women follow, all repeating the same apparently abominable language. Mrs. Morton, guessing the cause of the catastrophe, weeps behind the counter.

Evening falls and the shop is lit up. And now, to cap all, there comes in the cook from the vicarage. Pushing her way forward she takes out certain objects from a basket and lays them on the counter. To begin with, a plate of thin bread and butter. At a first inspection we observe nothing wrong with it, and Mrs. Morton, examining the slices under the gas, feebly says so. "Nothing wrong!" cries the cook, "you just wait till daylight and you'll see something! And look at this! Here's the loaf it was cut from"—and sure enough there is the damning evidence, plain for all eyes to see, even by gaslight.

Meanwhile the shade of coming calamity has extended to the bakehouse behind. As ill luck would have it the Inspector of Bakehouses for the Everstrike Corporation is that day on his rounds. He has finished a hasty inspection and finding everything spick and span is about to leave with the remark "all O.K."—when he happens to look into the dough trough, which George had not yet cleaned out. "What's this?" he cries. "And what's the matter with that sack of flour you're sitting on? Get

up. Well, I'm blessed if I ever saw such a sight. And what's this you've been cleaning up from the floor? Show me that mop and that bucket of water."

George showed the tell-tale implements and tried to explain.

"Tell that to them that will believe it," said the Inspector. "I'm going to report you. You're not old enough to be left in charge of a bakehouse."

Now the customers of the Morton bakery were in the habit of looking upon the supply of their daily bread as a purely economic transaction. Whatever labours, sacrifices, sufferings, contradictions and endurances might fall to the lot of the bakers in the process of furnishing the supply, these the customers regarded as covered by the price charged for the bread and as having received a sufficient *quid pro quo* when their bakers' bills were duly discharged. I do not mean that these people were exceptionally deficient in the humaner feelings. They were willing enough to believe that a baker's life is by no means one of the easiest or most attractive. They would listen with admiration to any orator or any preacher who made the point that their daily bread would not be forthcoming without a good deal of heroic perseverance among the workers in that department of industry. But to be reminded of a baker's heroism by discovering visible traces of it incorporated with the substance of their quartern loaves was a very different proposition. For this sort of reminder, with no eloquence to adorn it, the Everstrike bread-eaters had no relish. It was neither "beautiful" nor "touching." It was an offence against the

finer sensibilities. George, to be sure, had explained the circumstances to the inspector; Mrs. Morton had repeated the explanation to her customers; and the inference was pretty clear to an unbiased mind that George's heroic conduct was at the bottom of the whole affair. But the offence was too gross in the eyes of the customers to be whitewashed by the story of its moral genesis. No doubt the angels in high heaven were rejoicing over George and predicting that he would come to great honour. No doubt he was marked for promotion in the Book of Life. In the world below, however, the reactions were less favourable. People were indignant, resentful and abusive. Hence it came to pass that George's heroism in the bakehouse was requited, on earth, not with promotion, but with a knockdown blow. A few day after his misadventure the windows of "Morton, Baker and Confectioner" were irrevocably shuttered, no more teas were provided and the wedding cakes had to be ordered elsewhere.

Of spiritual effects, such as in ancient times participation in the blood of a hero was thought to produce, there was none observable in Everstrike, unless indignation is to be reckoned under the spiritual category. Yet one person there was (as a later narrative will tell) who seems to have been guided, whether by the intuitions of the heart, the insight of genius or the prompting of the Holy Ghost I cannot say, to a deeper apprehension of what these things meant. This was the young girl who had bitten her under lip and shed tears of pity when George showed his ugly face against the back-

ground of the rhododendron with the sooty leaves and the blood-red flowers.

And what of his mother and sisters? Did these unfortunate women proceed forthwith to heap reproaches on the head of George as the female side is so apt to do when male-caused misfortune gives opportunity? Not they! The Mortons were of a different mettle. "My blessed boy," cried Mrs. Morton as she flung her arms round his neck, "it all happened through doing your duty. God will take care of us." And the valiant sisters, with their poor frocks and pale faces, said much the same. And George answered, "Mother, we are not beaten yet." Nor were they. The mother lived to see George a famous man. And the sisters are living now on the good income George left them, the two most cultivated and delightful old maids in Smokeover.

The story of the family migration to that great city, where a relative hardly less indigent than themselves took them in, of their struggle with poverty, of what George did to maintain his mother and sisters, and how he managed to get himself educated by means of Mechanics Institutes, Kensington science classes, University Extension lectures and so forth, until finally the benevolent Mr. Hooker, well known for good works, found him out and sent him to the University—all this may be read at large in the two volume biography which the good Margaret, not without reason, found so 'beautiful.'

And here a huge gap in which, one would think, all the unities must be irrevocably lost, yawns in my tale of the relations between George Morton and Lady Gwen. We came to a halt at the great Mo-

ment when the Heavenly Vision acclaimed George as a hero and then vanished out of sight amid the shrubberies of Everstrike Vicarage. For fifty-six years after that there was no further speech, either written or vocal, no further contact through the eye, the ear, or any other sense, between those two. But the last words the Vision had spoken went echoing on. There is nothing else to fill the gap.

That George and Lady Gwen went about during the long years mourning for one another like disconsolate doves is not what I have to tell. The affair was transient, like a flower in springtime; the wind passed over it and it was gone, though I dare say, and Margaret is quite sure, that a faint scent of it lingered on for many years, like the scent of the roses which Lady Gwen kept with George's portrait, on the table by her bedside. Both of them became, in the course of their long pilgrimage, fully occupied with more important affairs, Lady Gwen in art, George in science, and each in a manner most cheerful, vigorous and efficient. However, it was not *quite* all over between them, as we shall see.

On a certain morning in June not long ago, Lady Gwendoline Penderghoste, who for some reason has remained unmarried, accompanied by her confidential secretary, Miss White, is paying her annual visit to the Royal Academy Exhibition. Lady Gwendoline, in spite of her seventy years, is a vigorous and active-minded woman and regularly contributes a criticism of the Royal Academy, in which she has been a frequent exhibitor herself, to one of the London papers. Her eyes are still violet, though

not quite so lustrous as they once were, her hair is no more in a long plait, but gathered in white masses round her head, her face is furrowed by time, but softly illuminated with intelligence, the fine nostrils still quiver, and the exquisite curve of the mouth is by no means obliterated.

This morning she has resolved to devote herself exclusively to the portraits, of which there are many in the exhibition, and is examining them one by one, making notes in a book she carries for the purpose.

Suddenly she pauses before the portrait of a grey-haired man in academic robes, and the note-book drops from her hand. Miss White picks it up.

"White," says the old lady in a voice yet sweet, "I seem to know that face. Turn up the catalogue and tell me who it is."

Miss White turns up the catalogue and reads out "George Morton, Professor of Bacteriology in Smokeover University."

"Ha!" says Lady Gwen, "I half thought it."

"Do you know him?" asks Miss White.

"No. But I remember him from the time when I was a chit at school. He was our baker's boy. And a remarkably good-looking boy as I remember him. That was more than fifty years ago. But the face is strangely the same."

Lady Gwen passes on to another portrait, but presently says, "My dear, I feel rather tired. Telephone for the car to fetch me at twelve instead of one."

That afternoon, the two ladies were sitting together at the tea table in the Belgravia flat, and Miss White, as usual, was looking through *The*

Times for news that might interest Lady Gwen. "Oh," she suddenly said, "here's something about Professor George Morton." And she began to read the obituary notice of Dr. Hopkinson, the eye-specialist of Smokeover. The concluding sentence ran thus: "The funeral will take place on Thursday next at 3 p.m. in the Smokeover Cemetery, and an address will be given at the graveside by Professor George Morton, President of the Smokeover Positivist Society."

In the evening as she was about to retire Lady Gwen said quietly to Miss White, "My dear, I am going down to Smokeover for Thursday. I shall go in the car and come back next day, staying with my cousin, the Vicar of Everstrike. I shall go alone. It would interest me to hear Professor Morton's address and to see him after so many years."

We pass on to Thursday; the hour is 3 p.m. and we are waiting near an open grave in Smokeover Cemetery. We are about to witness a Positivist funeral. We observe the long cortège that follows the bier of Dr. Hopkinson, and take our place in the crowd that gathers round the graveside. Presently an old man of tall figure and fine countenance steps forward and begins to speak. This is Professor George Morton, President of the Smokeover Positivist Society."

He speaks with the subdued force of a man under perfect self-control. He speaks as one who is afflicted by the death of his friend and feels the solemnity of the hour, and not as one who would exploit death for the funeral eloquence that can be got out of it. He makes his points in order, touching

only on those that are essential. He dwells largely on Dr. Hopkinson's services to ophthalmic science. That finished, he turns to the personal characteristics of his friend. And we hear him saying this—"Hopkinson, as many of his patients can testify, was a reader of the human heart."

At the same moment he looks up and meets the gaze of a pair of violet eyes from the other side of the grave. They are the eyes of an elderly lady wrapped in a coat of sable. We have observed them ourselves and wondered who she was.

On the instant George Morton recognizes her, and, quite distinctly, there comes to him out of the distant past the sound of a young voice saying "you brave boy!" The sound floods his consciousness; inhibits every faculty save that which hears it; his brain refuses to act; his tongue stammers, and he breaks down.

Let Margaret take up the tale.

"I see the lady standing there some time, sir, and I wonders who she might be. A fine-looking lady she was, aristocratic every inch of her. The master, he doesn't see her at first; but she sees him, and never takes her eyes off his face for one single second. 'What are you staring at?' says I to myself.

"Then the master catches her eye and stops dead. If the lightning had struck him that instant he couldn't have stopped deader. Thinks I, 'He's forgotten what he had to say; I hope he'll remember it.' But not he! There he stands with his face in a twist and with his hand to his head. 'It's a apoplectic fit,' says the undertaker; 'fetch a doctor.'

But the master he turns round to me and says, 'Margaret, I must go home.' So I catches him by the arm. And a woman near by says to me, 'If they'd had a proper clergyman this wouldn't have happened.' And I says, 'You mind your own business.' Then the lady comes pushing through and says, 'Oh my God!' and takes hold of his other arm, and I says, 'No, madam, you leave him alone; it's your staring at him that's upset him.' And just as I was getting him into the car, up comes Dr. Terrapin, and helps me to get him in, and I says, 'Send that lady away, sir, she's nothing to do with him,' for she was still bothering about and saying she'd come with us. So I bangs the door to in her face and off we goes. And the master, he says, 'I'll be all right soon,' and the doctor feels his pulse and says there's no cause for alarm.

"We got him home and the doctor soon leaves us. 'It's only a passing weakness,' he says; 'keep him quiet and he'll be all right to-morrow.' So I gets him a cup of tea. As he was drinking it he says a funny thing I didn't understand at the time, though I do now. 'I am ashamed of myself for breaking down, Margaret,' says he; 'she'll despise me for a coward'—for you see, sir, her calling him 'brave boy' when they were children had a lot to do with making him the noble gentleman he was.

"Well, after tea, he says, the master does, 'Margaret, a little fresh air would do me good. I'm going to take a walk.' 'You'd better keep quiet,' I says, 'but if you go out don't go far, and mind you take your coat and umbrella, for it rained while you were getting your tea, and though it's

stopped raining now it looks like coming on again.' So out he goes, and, a little later, I goes down in the hall and notices he'd left both coat and umbrella behind him. 'There!' says I, 'and it's raining already, and he'll get as wet as a sop, and him not well. I'll have him down again with the rheumatism in his back.'

"Well, sir, that was five o'clock. Seven o'clock struck, and he'd not come home, and me almost out of my senses, and going out into the street every minute to look for him, and asking the policeman if he'd seen him, when I ought to have been getting his dinner ready, and the rain pouring down all the time. When a quarter to eight come I could bear it no longer, so I takes his coat and umbrella, and another for myself, and out I goes. 'I wonder if he's gone back to the cemetery,' I says to myself, for, you know, sir, that's where he laid his old mother, and he often used to go there for a walk on summer evenings, though they always close at half-past eight. So I rushes off to the cemetery as fast as I could, and when I gets there I see a big motor standing by the gates. 'Have you seen a tall gentleman,' I says to the driver, 'with a white scar over his right eye?'—it was the cut as he got, sir, when he fell in his bakehouse as a boy. 'Yes,' says the driver, 'and he's gone into that cemetery with my lady'—though he put a vile word before cemetery that I won't repeat—'and they ought to have been back a hour ago,'—and I must say, sir, and you must excuse me for saying it, that if ever there was a cemetery in this world that deserved the vile word he put before it, it was the cemetery where my

master met his death. 'It's the lady that stared at him,' thinks I; 'she's been at it again,' and there, sure enough, was her big sable coat lying on the back seat of the car, for the night was warm, though wet. I was in that cemetery before you could say two ticks, and as I passes the keeper's house he comes out and says, 'Closing time in a quarter of a hour; if you see a lady and gentleman tell 'em to hurry up.'

"Well, there was not a soul about, and I couldn't see nothing of them, look where I would. And then, I don't know what it was, but something inside me seemed to say, 'Look for them at Alderman Bumford's angel.' So off I goes again, though the angel was at the other end of the cemetery, and the rain coming down like Noah's flood.

"Well, sir, would you believe it, there they was, the pair of them, one on each side of the angel's legs. What it was that took 'em to the cemetery at all, nobody knows and nobody ever will. But I dare say the poor things had gone to the angel to get out of the wet, for you know, sir, the two wings stick out at the side like two big umbrellas. But there they was, and little good the angel's wings had done 'em. I can see 'em now just as I saw 'em then, both of 'em sitting on the stone the angel stands on, him bent down with his head in his hands, like this, and she leaning to one side, like this, against the angel's leg, and both of 'em wet to the skin and she sobbing fit to break your heart.

"I goes up to the lady first and I says, 'Madam, you've led him into this,' but when I see the state she was in, with her fine dress wet through and

clinging round her body, and her eyes full of sorrow, I hadn't the heart to speak another angry word. So I says to both of 'em, 'Come away this minute, the pair of you, or you'll be locked in for the night and catch your death of cold,' little knowing how true I spoke. 'Nothing matters now,' says the master. 'Matters *now!*' says I, 'but won't something matter to-morrow when you get the lumbago in your back? A pretty go we'll have after this! Come away.' But the lady, she said nothing.

"So we all three left the Bumford Angel and walked back to the cemetery gates, the lady leaning on my master's arm and shaking with the cold, or perhaps with what she was thinking about, and nobody speaking a word, unless you count it talking when the lady drew a big sigh and said 'Oh.' And the keeper had to let us out, because the hour of closing had struck and the iron gates were shut and the night was coming on.

"When we got to the motor, the master took off his hat and handed her in, and a royal nobleman he looked as he did it: I can see him now. But not a word did they speak except 'good-bye.' She drove off to where she was staying and the master stood with his hat off looking after her.

"You know the rest, sir, at least as concerns the master. He was took ill the next day; it turned to rheumatic fever in a week, and he was dead in a fortnight.

"But what you may have forgotten, sir, if you ever knew it, and what nobody in the world but me knows the meaning of, is that Lady Penderghoste died on the very self-same day as my master. It

was the pneumonia that carried her off. And she died in Everstrike Vicarage where she was born. And all the time they were dying, she at her cousin's where she was staying, and me nursing him, both had the telephones by their bedsides and would talk through them every day, till their minds began to wander and the delirium came on. Only the master would always send me out of the room when they rang one another up, and never a word of what passed between them did I hear. And didn't want to. For both of them knew very well that the call had come to the long journey that awaits us all.

"But he would tell me his story in the weary nights, and would often babble in his dreams of days long past. But, oh, sir, he was 'brave boy' to the very last, not making a murmur when the pains got him, as they do, sir, fearful, in rheumatic fever, for I had it once myself, and saying to me when the fit was over—shall I ever forget it—'Margaret,' says he, 'I can stand a lot of pain still.' And the last clear words he said, though there was many unclear that came afterwards, was, these very ones—'The dough's kneaded, mother; but there's blood in the bread.'

"Oh, sir, he didn't go to church nor to chapel, didn't the master, and they burnt him to ashes in the crematory without a soul to say a prayer for his resurrection, and it made me think of his baker's oven, that it did; but he fought the good fight, he did, and God has prepared a place for all such. And her with a face like a royal queen's, that ought to have been a mother of children! And both of them so beautiful when they were young, but parted, for

reasons we're not wise enough to know! And to see they two poor creatures as I saw 'em in the rain that night sitting under Bumford's angel, wet to the skin and her sobbing fit to break your heart; and *then* to think of them crossing the dark river side by side, like Christian and Hopeful in the story, and all the trumpets sounding for 'em in the King's city, and now walking in glory among the Shining Ones—together, please God!"

CHAPTER THREE

The Penderghoste Will

IT has been my lot to walk through life in the company of powerful beings, of whom I cannot say with scientific precision whether they are real people of flesh and blood or phantoms of the mind. I strongly suspect they are both, but how much of the one and how much of the other I do not know. Judged by the influence they exercise on my affairs I should have no hesitation in calling them "real historical personages," and I often speak to others of their doings as though they lived in the next street. But when my friends bring me to book and ask where these powerful personages are to be met with, and say they would like to be introduced to this one or that, I fall into a bewilderment and can only answer evasively. Sometimes I persuade myself that they are mere fancies, but I have no sooner done so than one or the other of them is sure to walk into the room clothed in the flesh and blood of some man or woman I have known for years. If you choose to say that these powerful neighbours of mine are unreal, I can only answer that they have a strange way of turning up in the visible forms of people whose names and addresses can be found in the local directory, or in Burke's Peerage.

It may also be true that the doings and sayings

I ascribe to them only happened in dreams. But I cannot admit that happening in dreams is the same thing as not happening at all. Whether what happens in dreams is more or less real than what happens otherwise seems to me to depend on the dreamer. This room in which I am writing is unquestionably real. Why? Because good dreaming has made it real. Did not Kant say "my world is representation"? The real is the fruit of good dreams. The unreal is the fruit of bad ones. Even St. Paul was not always clear as to whether he was in the body or out of it. But he evidently attached no importance to the question as affecting the reality of what he had to announce. And Plato concludes the ninth book of the *Republic* with the same note of indifference. Why should lesser minds be more explicit?

I will now introduce the reader (so far as it can be done under such equivocal circumstances) to two of these "powerful beings," a Heroine and a Hero, one in this chapter, the other in the next. The first is already known to the reader by sight: her name is Gwendoline Penderghoste. The second shall be named in due course. On the question of their historical reality I can only say that, had I never encountered them ("whether in the body or out of the body, God knoweth") this book about "The Heroes of Smokeover" would have been differently written, perhaps not written at all.

There are two maxims which I never fail to repeat when a fitting opportunity for doing so comes my way either in public or in private, and which critics, when-

ever they happen to notice what I write, accuse me of having stolen from Carlyle.

The first of these maxims concerns the basis of the Christian religion, and runs as follows:

"The primary religious exercise for a Christian man is to get the day's work done in the best manner it admits of. So far as this exercise is neglected all prayers become hollow, all sacraments profane, all doctrines false and all churches foundationless."

The second is a definition of the aim, end, ideal or ultimate objective of the Labour Party:

"That every labourer shall enjoy his labour and a good article come out at the end of it."

Both these maxims, I have now to confess, are stolen. So far the critics are right. But they are not stolen, as the critics allege, from Carlyle. They are stolen from the Penderghoste Will. They stand, word for word, as I have given them above, in the Preamble to that remarkable document. Let doubters consult the files in Somerset House.

It is true that the writings of Carlyle contain many texts, or pregnant sayings, that support the two maxims aforesaid, and I am not surprised at the critics thinking that I have stolen them from that prolific source. Nor should I be surprised if inquiry were to reveal the fact that Lady Gwendoline Penderghoste, before making her will, had been reading the works of Carlyle, such as the *Latter Day Pamphlets* or *Past and Present*. Indeed, there are several phrases both in the Preamble and in the text of the will which indicate that she had. All the

same the two maxims were unknown to me until I found them in the Preamble to the Penderghoste Will. A copy of this was placed in my hands by Miss White, Lady Gwendoline's confidential secretary, under circumstances I am about to describe.

The Borough of Everstrike is not a pleasure resort, nor can I recommend it to seekers of rest, pure air, or meditative solitude. But vast multitudes go there daily on business, and if any one of these, having an hour to spare between engagements, is interested to see a visible confirmation of the events recorded in the last narrative, and to meditate thereon, let him take the electric tram, No. 39, which runs every few minutes from Trades Union Square, and ask the conductor to put him down at the gates of Everstrike Vicarage.

Following the drive which winds through shrubberies between the gates and the house, the visitor's attention will be caught half-way by a large white cross, of simple but massive construction, standing on the left-hand side. For the moment he may think himself in presence of a War Memorial. But clearly it is not that. On the base of the cross are the intertwined initials G.P. and G.M., and beneath them are inscribed these words:

"Love's Labour is not lost."

Immediately behind the cross stand the remains of a mighty rhododendron, still alive, but obviously dying of old age, accelerated by the action of the Everstrike atmosphere. This is the identical rhododendron in the then luxuriant foliage of which

George Morton hid his disfigured countenance when Lady Gwendoline Penderghoste passed him by in the pony carriage on her way to school. The cross commemorates that event. It certainly commemorates that, but I think that it also commemorates other events which flowed from that, or grew out of it (as we say) in the working out through long years of a subtle chain of cause and effect.

If now you make inquiry of the gardener as to what it all means he will probably repeat the story current in the neighbourhood, that underneath the cross are buried the mingled ashes of Lady Gwendoline and George Morton, both cremated on the same day. In this the gardener will be partly right, like the critics who accuse me of stealing my maxims from Carlyle. Underneath the cross the ashes of Lady Gwendoline unquestionably lie buried; and other ashes are mingled with them. But they are not the ashes of George Morton's body. They are the ashes of another object, incinerated by Lady Gwendoline's executors in pursuance of certain directions laid down in her will.

The following passage from the will explains (up to a point) what the object was:

"I bequeath to the said Marion White the drawing of a boy's head which I have kept for many years by my bedside, together with the Louis Quinze table on which it stands. Included in this bequest is the olive-wood box which will be found in the locked drawer of the said table. Immediately after my cremation Marion White will saturate this box, which is on no account to be opened, in an inflammable

liquid, and in the presence of four witnesses, who shall be satisfied that the seal is unbroken, will burn it to ashes, the witnesses legally attesting that the same has been done, and will mingle the ashes with my own, and bury the urn containing both at a point in the drive approaching the vicarage of Everstrike, where a rhododendron bearing blood-red flowers is still alive, and where I have caused a white cross to be erected. They will place the urn immediately under the cross and inscribe the same with the words 'Love's Labour is not lost.' And in the event of the said Marion White failing to comply in any particular with this condition, the same being legally attested, I hereby declare that all the provisions of this my last will and testament by which she benefits are null and void, and I dispose of the legacies falling to her as follows: . . ."

The legacy to Miss White, to which the above condition was affixed, amounted to £15,000. The total estate was valued at over £200,000, and except for the legacy to Miss White was left in Trust for the promotion of popular religious education on the lines of the two maxims, explicitly worded as I have given them, which I am accused of stealing from Carlyle.

For that purpose an elaborate scheme is laid down in the will, the main features being thus described:

"the establishment in the Boroughs of Smokeover and Everstrike of Schools of Labour in which the pupils on attaining a certain age can gain their livelihood by the work actually carried on in the Schools,

thereby combining their education and their life's work into a single process."

According to the provisions of the will two schools only are to be established in the first instance, one in Smokeover, the other in Everstrike, each equipped with a capital of £100,000. The course of instruction is to be so arranged that while in the earlier stages it conforms to the character of 'schooling' as commonly understood, in the later stages it gradually changes into the production of saleable commodities, by approved industrial methods, or into some form of service needed in production. Unlike most of the schools now in existence which prepare the pupil, or profess to prepare him, for his future vocation, and then leave him to his own devices to find a vocation in which he can make use of what he has learnt, the Penderghoste Schools provide the vocation on the spot and give the pupils the best teaching available, not only which he is a child or youth preparing for his life's work, but while he is actually engaged on it; his education and his labour thus proceeding *pari passu* so long as he chooses to remain at school, which may be to the end of his life. In this way the aim of the schools is industrial quite as much as it is educational.

Regarded from the later stages of the course the Penderghoste Schools are really factories or workshops, and the pupils are, in part, adults of all ages, earning weekly wages or yearly salaries as the case may be. But here again they differ from ordinary factories by giving primary consideration throughout to the educational value of the work done, of the

goods turned out and of the money earned, the pupils being instructed, at every stage of their course, not only in the most profitable ways of making money, but also in the most profitable ways of spending it. They differ also in the prominence given throughout to the two maxims quoted above concerning the nature of the day's work and the basis of religion, the whole scheme being expressly defined in the will as "an Experiment in Religious Education." As an experiment the possibility of failure is of course contemplated, and there is a curious clause in the will (which some think it would have been wiser not to insert) exonerating the Penderghoste Trustees from blame if, after due efforts made, the whole undertaking goes bankrupt. This of course may happen. The difficulties in making a start have been enormous, and it is only within the last few months that the Trustees have been able to take effective measures to put the scheme on a workable footing. The circumstances which made that possible will be described in a later narrative.

Naturally, there was much disappointment among Lady Gwendoline's nephews and nieces when the contents of the will were made known, and I heard a rumour, which has since died down, that some of them were disposed to dispute its validity in the courts, on the ground that the nature of the main bequest clearly proved Lady Gwendoline to have been of unsound mind at the time of making it. Whether this plea would have held in law I do not know. It might have received some corroboration from the strange condition imposed upon Miss White with reference to the olive-wood box. But

I imagine that the case of the plaintiffs would have been considerably embarrassed by the fact that none of them could say for certain what the box contained. I have my own suspicions as to what the contents were; Miss White had hers and perhaps the reader will have his when he has learnt all I have to tell him of Lady Gwendoline's extraordinary life.

There is one statement, however, on the negative side, that I can make with absolute assurance about the olive-wood box. The box did not contain a collection of compromising love letters. A statement important to make, in view of the fact that certain people are abroad who profess to have gained secret access to the box during Lady Gwendoline's lifetime, to have copied the letters, and to have them ready as a spicy addition to the *chronique scandaleuse* of Victorian times, to be exploited no doubt in the interests of 'morality.' What I have now to tell will at least spoil the game of these villains. I am in a position to prove that though Lady Gwendoline doubtless received many love letters in her time, and many of them from persons whose names are known to the public, not one of those letters was ever in that box. The contents of it, whatever they were, had to do with George Morton, and George Morton never wrote a letter of one kind or another to Lady Gwendoline. Between him and her there passed no visible or audible sign from the day they parted as children by the rhododendron in the drive to the day when they met again, more than fifty years afterwards, by the graveside of Dr. Hopkinson. I have unimpeachable evidence of that.

Nevertheless, there was a link between them which held unbroken through the half-century, and but for which I verily believe the Penderghoste Schools would never have been founded. The link, or the symbol of it, was in that box, and it now mingles, incinerated beyond all recognition, with the ashes of Lady Gwendoline, beneath the great stone cross, on which the words are inscribed: "Love's Labour is not lost."

What took place beside the rhododendron, in those far-off days, was a small thing. The circumstances connected with it—George Morton's toothache, his adventures in the bakehouse, the blood-stained bread, the eating of it by the Penderghoste household, and the subsequent fall of the house of Morton—all these were trifles. But causes whose roots are old as time and deep as eternity often withhold their effects until a trifle precipitates them into action. Nor can there be a doubt that it was so here. Two heroic spirits, as yet ungrown to their heroism, were in contact for a moment, and out of that contact a light was kindled which grew to be the master-light of all their seeing and became the determinative influence of both their lives. This is the fact that stands commemorated in the stone cross and the inscription on its base. They record the insight of a woman looking back from the brink of life, when the significance of things is revealed, to events which occurred when she stood upon its threshold and the significance of things was hidden. Some relic of those happenings there must have been, some fragment of this or of that, treasured as an amulet, worn perhaps on the person, carried into scenes of danger

and looked upon as a reminder in critical moments—some such thing there must have been that Lady Gwendoline kept close to her through the long years, an intimate possession, of which it would be pleasant to think that the ashes would mingle with her own when the everlasting silence fell. Have we not seen that she kept by her side, as one reminder, the portrait of George Morton? Why should she not have kept something else? I have my suspicions what it was.

It is quite possible that in a few years the name of Gwendoline Penderghoste will have fallen into oblivion. This will assuredly happen if the experiment in education set on foot by her will proves impracticable, or comes to grief. If, on the other hand, the experiment succeeds, as some think it may, my own belief is that in future ages Lady Gwendoline will be venerated among the greatest of the heroes and heroines born within the boundaries of Smokeover or Everstrike, and even become, perhaps, the Patron Saint, or Guardian Angel, of the dense populations that swarm in that area.

That her character was not free from superstition is amply proved by the circumstances I have just described—by her carrying about her person an amulet, or sacred relic, for the purpose of remaining in mystical contact with an obscure human being who had passed completely beyond the range of her senses, and by the strange and perhaps morbid fancy which led to the instructions in her will concerning the burial of her ashes. But this should not impair her claim to be counted among the heroines of her native place. An element of superstition is not

uncommon in great minds, at least in great minds of a certain order. In lives that are guided by the calculations of reason it would of course be entirely out of place, and would be properly counted a defect. But those whose destiny dooms them to follow the line of the creative imagination, and who cannot help themselves from so doing even when cold reason warns them off, will often find in the by-play of superstition a relief from high tension that would otherwise be intolerable. The superstitions of those people are, we may say, their spiritual holidays, which cannot be abolished, or even abridged, without disaster. If the reader himself, for example, after considering what I have told him should come to the conclusion that the spirit of Lady Gwendoline is even now acting as some sort of Guardian Angel to Smokeover and Everstrike, and exercising, from whatever regions it may inhabit, a beneficent influence over the fortunes of those twin cities—I, for one, would not argue against his belief, superstitious though it unquestionably would be. Some would remind him that the dead have no votes. But that argument is not mine.

Not long after I became acquainted with the circumstances of Lady Gwendoline's death, as described in the former narrative, I entered into correspondence with Miss White to whom I imparted what I had learnt, and from whom I received much information in return. Miss White was one of the original Penderghoste Trustees and she was also Lady Gwendoline's literary executor. In the latter capacity she allowed me to read a number of manuscripts all dealing with educational matters, the pub-

lication of which, according to the terms of the will, is not to take place till the Penderghoste Schools are fairly established and have had a fair trial. At some future time I may have to undertake the labour of editing these manuscripts. At this stage I can only say that they leave me convinced that Lady Gwendoline deserves to be reckoned among the most prescient minds of her age. Nothing that I have read about Education appears to me of equal value, and I am astonished at the restraint which Lady Gwendoline must have put upon herself in withholding them from publication during her lifetime. And yet I think she was wise. For the ideas she brings forward are of such a kind that the only way to demonstrate their practicability is by putting them into practice, as the Penderghoste Trust is now endeavouring to do. If the experiment fails (and Lady Gwendoline never overlooked that possibility) the publication of the manuscripts will lie at the discretion of the Penderghoste Trustees.

Miss White was of equal age with Lady Gwendoline. She is now dead. She knew the secret of the olive-wood box, but she volunteered no information about it and I was careful to ask no questions. Indeed I felt so secure in the inferences I had already drawn about that matter that I was hardly tempted to question her. On her side my knowledge of the contents was taken for granted; and it was not a point that either of us wished to discuss.

Shortly before her death it was arranged between Miss White and myself that I was to write the Life of Lady Gwendoline Penderghoste from the material in her possession. Miss White's sudden death has,

I fear, rendered this impossible, for there are many circumstances connected with Lady Gwendoline's adventurous life which I would not take the responsibility of making public without the assurance that they were rightly presented, an assurance which Miss White alone could have given me. This, to me, was a great disappointment. For one of my motives in attempting the Life was to save from spoliation the memory of a very noble woman. Hers was a life to tempt the spoilers, and it would have been good to forestall them.

But shortly before her death Miss White furnished me in writing with a bald outline of the facts on which the biography would have to be planned. This, with a few abridgments, I shall now reproduce.

"Those who think the mid-Victorian girls lacked driving power made a mistake. There was at least one Tartar among them, and her name was Gwen Penderghoste. At sixteen she dominated the vicarage. Old Lord William adored her and gave in to every whim. She was wonderfully beautiful and was run after by men before she put up her hair.

"On leaving school, where she had been uncontrollable, she announced her intention of becoming a painter, and was sent to London for the purpose, nobody daring to dispute the matter. She had an inborn gift for drawing the human body, both draped and nude, and this soon took the form of painting soldiers and battle scenes. At that time Garibaldi was the popular idol, and many girls in good society went off their heads in a kind of hero-worship. Gwen was one of his most ardent worshippers. She painted

scenes in Garibaldi's campaigns, battles, marches and bivouacs, all done with great accuracy and knowledge of military affairs. These she would send to Italy, to Garibaldi at Caprera, and to his former officers. Some of them are to be seen in Italy to this day, and striking pictures they are.

"Then suddenly she threw up painting and took to dancing on the stage under an assumed name. I must tell you that, along with a marvellous perfection of form, she possessed great physical strength and was capable all her life of endurance such as I have seen in no other woman. It served her well on the stage. By this time she was virtually separated from the family, who were scandalized by her doings. Old Lord William was now dead.

"She danced in London and in the Continental capitals, everywhere beset by a pack of dangerous men whom her beauty had maddened. Never was woman exposed to temptations more frightful, and God knows how she came through. But it was not all on the Sunday-school model.

"In 1870, when she was twenty, came the Franco-German War, and you may remember how Garibaldi left Caprera and raised a contingent for the support of France.

"As soon as Lady Gwen heard of it she threw up her engagements in London, where she was making a great income, and rushed off to the Continent. She found Garibaldi's headquarters and, having cut off her hair and disguised herself as a man, enlisted in the ranks, where she found two other women who had done the same. One of them was an Italian countess who had fought under Garibaldi

in his more famous campaigns. This woman was much older than Lady Gwen and often protected her from the danger she was in, more of course from friends than foes. Once she shot an officer who had insulted her English friend, and was under sentence of death by court martial when the truth about Lady Gwen came out. The women took part in all the hardships of military service, the forced marches and the exposures, and Lady Gwen was present in several battles. By keeping together they managed to preserve their disguise for a time, until, in an action with the Germans, near Dijon, Lady Gwen was wounded in the side and her sex discovered.

"When the excitements of the war were over, reaction came on, and she fell into profound depression, as one who has nothing left to live for. In Paris she made the acquaintance of M. Renan, but finding no comfort in that quarter, turned to the priests, and finally threw herself into the arms of the Church. She became a nun of the Order of the Annunciation, and entered a convent.

"After two years she broke out of the convent at night and escaped to London, where she again took up dancing on the stage. But the wound in her side had damaged some small muscle that is needed in the poise of the body, and she no longer danced with the old perfection. On one occasion she lost control of the rhythm and was hissed by the audience. She never danced again. It was during her second dancing period that she engaged me as her dresser, and we were unparted till she died.

"We spent some years in travel, always shadowed

by men. Then she returned to painting, her old love. She had a studio in Mayfair and painted battle pictures as before, but now of course with greater power. This went on till the early 'nineties.

"She had hosts of friends in good society, though there were some who regarded her as *déclassée.* She knew most of the famous men in London at that time; went frequently to country houses and had a great correspondence. I used to write her letters, for she had no secrets from me.

"I think it was in '94 that she first came into contact with the socialists, mainly through her admiration of William Morris. She never became a socialist herself, but these people got her interested in social affairs. She took up education and was elected on a school board. This now became the passion of her life.

"She as full of ideas, and though she never came into public notice, had great influence with the people who were reforming education, as well as with the officials at Whitehall, for all the men were still at her feet, and she could have married at any time. But some strange influence was over her that kept her from that—a man-haunted woman who never married.

"Her great idea was to establish 'schools which the pupils would never want to leave'—that was her phrase. She had a large fortune, partly inherited, partly earned by her dancing and painting, and she poured out thousands on her schemes. She established schools in different parts of the country to be worked on the lines she laid down. But properly equipped teachers were not to be found, and the

schools one by one came to grief and the money was lost. But she never gave it up, and was starting a new school when she died. 'If we stick to it long enough,' she used to say, 'we shall succeed, and a new era in education will begin! The school age will rise automatically and people will keep in contact with school all their lives.' As you know, the whole of her estate, except what she left to me, went to education.

"You now see the main divisions you will have to observe in writing her *Life*. My suggestion is that you deal with the early periods as shortly as possible and put the weight of the book from 1880 onwards. The significant period begins from the time when she fell under the influence of William Morris.

"In dealing with her character, you must never forget that she was an artist in every fibre of her being. Keep that always to the front, or she will not be intelligible to anybody. She was also very superstitious and believed she was under the control of mysterious influences, one of which was connected with the amulet she always carried.

"But the most difficult matter of all will be her connection with George Morton. There is really nothing to be told about it, beyond one or two trifling incidents. And yet you know, and I know, that it was the determining influence on her life. How do you propose to manage that?"

Such was the sketch, or outline, furnished to me by Miss White as defining the general scope of Lady Gwendoline's *Life*. The concluding question left me aghast, and perhaps I am to be congratulated

that the task is no longer on my hands. In a few years the only monuments of Lady Gwendoline's life will be the stone cross in the Vicarage garden and (D.V.) the Penderghoste Schools. Her will, it seems to me, is worthy of its name, not only in the legal sense, as a carefully drawn and entirely intelligible document, but in the psychological sense, as a summary act of volition whereby the force and significance of a human life are perpetuated beyond the grave. Nor am I ashamed to confess that from it were stolen the two maxims which I have quoted above, and which I intend to go on repeating till the silence falls.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Hero Introduced

"THE rule of the good life," I said, "is this: treat every man as an end in himself and never as means to an end."

"It's a trap," replied Mr. Smith, "though I've often heard it applauded at public meetings."

"It's an impossibility," said the Professor, "and may easily become hypocrisy. No man can live a day in society without using other people as means to his own ends and, what is more, being used by them as means to theirs. You are violating the rule in asking me to listen to you at the present moment."

"Well put!" exclaimed Mr. Smith. "But mark this: when a man is not willing to be used for other people's ends the sooner he clears out the better."

"Every rule of life confutes itself if pushed to extremes," said the Professor.

"This rule," I went on, "describes a state of tension——"

"I'm sick of your 'states of tension,' " interrupted Mr. Smith.

"—A state of tension between the knowledge that you oughtn't to use people as means to your own ends and the discovery that you can't help doing so. A man with a conscience is always in that condition."

"Bosh!" cried Mr. Smith. "A man who expects

other people to treat him as an end in himself is the sort of man I despise, and I can tell you there's a lot of them about, especially among the moneyed classes and the parsons. And as for expecting other people to treat *me* as an end in myself—well, I'd be damned before I'd make any such claim. I tell you it's a trap which the rich have laid for the poor."

The author of this somewhat unusual comment on the august system of Moral Philosophy propounded by the immortal Kant was the Right Honourable Harold Smith, Labour M. P. for the Paradise Division of Smokeover.

Mr. Harold Smith was the son of an agricultural labourer in the North of England who, some fifty years ago, had drifted into Newcastle-on-Tyne, where he lived in a slum and brought up his family of nine in a single room. Mr. Smith himself, in the days preceding his rise to political eminence, had worked a coal barge on the River Tyne and been a mighty man in the bunkering of steamships, winning fame, incidentally, as an amateur pugilist, in which line of sport he had displayed a capacity for giving and receiving punishment that astonished even the toughs of Tyneside, where, so they say, a man will stand up after he has been knocked down a dozen times. How, under these untoward conditions, Mr. Smith had managed to acquire an education sufficient for his calling as representative of our Paradise Division and a competent manager of public business, gathering knowledge from many sources and becoming an excellent public speaker and a not unpresentable person in polite society—all this were an epic too long to be recited here, though the recitation

of it would certainly establish his claim to be reckoned among the Heroes of Smokeover. By some means or another he had been converted to pacificism—at least where international relationships were in question. But this had produced no essential change in his method of argument, not even when "peace and reconciliation" was the topic in debate, his capacity for giving and receiving punishment still asserting itself, as it had been wont to do on Tyneside, where the blow of his fist was said to resemble the kick of a horse. He was also a fanatical teetotaller of long standing, and though he was no boaster, he would sometimes refer to his victories by way of confirming his teetotal principles, attributing them to the fact that "he had never touched a drop" since the night when his father came home drunk and kicked his old mother to death.

Such, in brief, was the man, unquestionably one of the Heroes of Smokeover, whom we here encounter in the act of defying the greatest philosopher of modern times and declaring that he would rather risk perdition than ask other people to treat him as "an end in himself." We shall meet him again.

That the reader may appreciate the full force and significance of Mr. Smith's defiant ejaculation he must know something of the events which led up to it, and of the scene in which it occurred. It formed the climax to a long discussion between myself and the Professor about the "good life" in Smokeover, to which Mr. Smith had only contributed an occasional comment, and it was spoken amid surroundings far removed from that city and from the tensions thereof. I have placed it at the beginning

of this chapter, but the Wheel of Existence (of which I had lately been hearing from my Buddhist friend) will bring us back to it, full circle, at the end of the next.

My acquaintance with Mr. Smith originated in a small service I had been able to render, at no cost to myself—for it consisted in little more than signing my name—to his eldest son, a brilliant undergraduate in one of our universities. Realizing that no man could help me more in my Smokeover studies, in which I was then deeply engaged, and also, I think, because his human qualities greatly impressed me, I had taken pains to cultivate the friendship of our Labour M. P., which advances on my part he, on his, had not resented, though our opinions were in sharp opposition and frequently led to acrimonious discussion.

One day (it was on the eve of a by-election) I met him in Smokeover coming out of the Trades Union Headquarters. He told me that he was "getting fed up with the whole affair," having made no less than fifteen speeches that day. I was in much the same condition myself, though for very different reasons,—tired, not by making speeches, but by having to keep silence on topics that puzzled me, and for which I could find no sympathetic listener among my fellow citizens in Smokeover. In particular I wanted time to assimilate the startling revelation I had just received through the ministration of my Buddhist friend at the Cemetery Gates. So I suggested to Mr. Smith that it would be good for both of us to remove ourselves for a little from the scene of these turmoils, and having formed my own plans

for a trip to the Scandinavian countries (where I knew of certain quiet places that promised rest to the Smokeover mind), I boldly advanced the proposition that he should accompany me. To this he willingly assented, on condition, however, that his wife went with him. I liked that condition, both as revealing a good trait in Smith and also because I had a great esteem for his wife, whom I knew perhaps better than I knew him.

In the Scandinavian countries we were thrown much together, but I cannot say that the trip was a complete success from my point of view. From time to time I would broach the subject uppermost in my mind—the pull-towards-the-Cemetery and the pull-towards-the-Slums—as giving, between them, the key to our Smokeover civilization. To this Mrs. Smith would listen attentively and occasionally encourage me by saying that I was quite right. She particularly liked my notion of the slums being the Cemetery of the Living; and would say that when she and Harold lived in one of them it felt "just like being buried alive." Smith also was rather hit by that metaphor, and went so far in his sympathy as to write it down in his notebook for future use on the platform. But when I began to interpret the phenomena of Smokeover, as my Buddhist friend had taught me to do, in terms of cemetery- and slum-tension, he would brush all that aside as moonshine, and assert that the "present social system" was the real root of the trouble.

Indeed, Mr. Smith had solved the Problem of Evil with a neatness and precision that any theologian might envy. In his philosophy all the woes of man-

kind were traceable to our "present social system" as their true point of origin and causation, the private ownership of the means of production being responsible for the lot. When, for example, a storm broke upon us in the North Sea, and all the passengers fell seasick, Mr. Smith immediately scented Capitalism behind the mischief, and, not being seasick himself, went the round of the deck comforting the sufferers with the assurance that under an improved social system we should have steadier boats and better navigation; and even went the length of hinting to the Captain, who had been on the bridge all night, that he and the crew were being exploited by the shipping Company, a proceeding which led to an outburst of violent and ridiculous language from the Captain, a peppery old gentleman from Hull, in the course of which he informed the Labour Leader to his face that "men like him were ruining the country and ought to be put against a wall and shot."

No wonder, then, that all my attempts to interest Mr. Smith in my new-found theory of tensions proved abortive. Before I had time to explain what I meant he would launch the "present social system" into the field of debate, so that, however often the conversation began on my lines, it always ended on his, in a fierce set-to about Capital and Labour. And I can tell you he was a doughty antagonist, albeit I was convinced, and still am, that his bitter hatred of "the present social system" was derived far more from the memory of his old mother's horrible death in the Newcastle slum than from the teachings of Karl Marx, which he knew by heart.

And here I have to confess that we spent a great

deal of time in inconclusively discussing that topic, which would have been better spent in contemplating the mighty works of the Lord which surrounded us in Scandinavia, thereby cheating our tired Smokeover minds of the rest and refreshment we had promised them. Many a pang of regret did I suffer, many a glimpse did I get of my own absurdity, on realizing that, in the heat of some debate about Capital and Labour, in which neither of us made the least impression on the other's obduracy, we had heard nothing of the great cataracts calling to one another among the mountains, or passed under the shadow of some stupendous cliff with no more heed to what was before us than if we had been riding on the top of an electric tram through the nine miles of slums that connect Smokeover with the contiguous city of Everstrike. Mrs. Smith was wiser. She kept aloof from our wranglings and took a series of excellent photographs from the deck of the steamer, being a very skilful hand in that line, so that on returning to England, Smith and I were able to get some idea of the countries we had visited.

One day we found ourselves seated on the balcony of an hotel overlooking one of the grandest of the fjords. The day was wet. Our barometers had fallen to 'much rain,' as barometers not infrequently do in those watery regions, and a steady downpour, "cursed, cold and heavy" as that which Dante saw in Limbo, filled the field of vision and blanketed out the great mountains on the other side of the fjord. There were three of us on the balcony: Smith, a Professor from Cambridge (since dead), and myself. Being haters of bridge, duffers at billiards,

despisers of alcohol, and too unattractive to prosper in the flirtation department, which most of our fellow travellers seemed inclined to favour, we had retreated to the open balcony, where, wrapped in rugs and overcoats, we dug ourselves in behind a sufficient box of cigars (it belonged to Smith), and even went the length of locking the door behind us as a defence against bores.

During the journey I had frequent opportunities of observing that Smith's antipathy to the 'class' to which the Professor and I belonged—for, in spite of our protests, he insisted that we were not genuine workers but capitalists in the second degree—had no effect in preventing his benevolent intromissions whenever either of us was in difficulty. It was to one of those kindly acts on his part that we owed the present company of the Professor—a considerable addition to our intellectual resources, though not, as the sequel will show, to our peace of mind. We had discovered him in a very forlorn and distracted condition while staying at an hotel in Copenhagen; but it was Smith who found out the cause of his distress and relieved it. It appeared that the Professor, through the failure of a remittance he was expecting at Copenhagen, had suddenly found himself without resources and unable to pay his hotel bill. Smith, not uninspired, I imagine, by Mrs. Smith, had immediately produced the money, and the present position was that the Professor was paying his way on advances from the Labour Leader's modest purse. I thought it an admirable reproduction in modern terms of the conduct of the Good Samaritan, and I admired it the more because Smith, like the benev-

olent traveller in that parable, betrayed not the least consciousness that he was setting an example to future ages or that he had done an action which any decent Samaritan, or any decent Labour Leader, would not have done under similar circumstances. And it was interesting also to observe that the relationship thus created between him as benefactor and the Professor as beneficiary in no way diminished the asperity of the combats in which they were constantly engaging. Whether as an intellectual irritant or as a proficient in the art of spoiling an argument by a cold douche, I have seldom met the Professor's match. Often would he rouse Smith to fury (and me to a milder degree of it) by asserting that the conflict of Capital and Labour was a quite insignificant affair, a battle between frogs and mice, which might end either way without making one atom of difference to the values of human life. "Much ado about nothing" was his name for the controversy. Or when Smith and I were in the midst of a fell encounter about the question of public *versus* private ownership of wealth he would suddenly throw a wet blanket over both of us by asking, "but is the stuff *worth* owning, anyhow?" There is no evidence that the wounded man in the parable ever irritated the Good Samaritan in this way, and the fact that Smith kept up his pecuniary advances in spite of it will, I hope, be reckoned to him for righteousness in the resurrection of the just.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Conversation in Scandinavia

HAVING arranged ourselves in the manner aforesaid, our bodies in Scandinavia, our minds in Smokeover, visibilities blotted out by the rain, and nothing audible but our own voices and the sound of falling waters, I resumed the broken thread of our conversation the day before.

"As we came down the Naerodal yesterday," I said, "we were discussing the problem of spiritualizing the industries of Smokeover, and we broke off at the point where Smith said that it could only be done by a new social system with Labour permanently in control of it!"

"I thought we got a little further," said the Professor.

"Oh yes. To be sure we did! You had just replied to Smith that the Labour Party was hopelessly confused between its love of power and its desire to benefit the workingman, just as the churches were all confused between their love of souls and their desire to draw big congregations. It was then that a fellow came round for our tickets and told us we had arrived at our destination and that all the passengers had gone ashore half an hour ago."

"Yes, that was it," said Smith. "And if it hadn't been for that confounded ass interrupting us I'd

have wiped the floor with the Professor in two minutes. I'll do it now."

"No," I said firmly, "you will not. I'm chairman of this meeting and for once I mean to exercise my powers. The question before the House is the spiritualization of the industries of Smokeover. Anything else I rule out of order. The Professor shall move the Resolution and no man shall interrupt him."

I had chosen my language carefully, and Smith subsided at once.

"The industries of Smokeover will never be spiritualized," began the Professor, "until they grow a religion of their own, which may happen one of these days. You cannot spiritualize them, as the churches are trying to do, by imposing upon them a religion foreign to their own genius. The religion which is to reform Smokeover must grow out of things as they are in Smokeover to-day, just as the Christianity of the first century grew out of things as they were in Antioch, and such-like cities, then. But to think that Smokeover in the twentieth century will ever adopt the Christianity of Antioch in the first is the vainest of dreams. The Resolution, Mr. Chairman, is now before the House."

"You seem to me to be talking moonshine," said Smith. "The only religion the workers have any use for is the teaching of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount—'Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.' We can understand that."

"I am astonished at the liberties which you—which everybody in these days—permit yourselves to take with the name of Christ," answered the Pro-

fessor. "People make up a religion or a morality that they think will go down with the masses, and then they go about saying that Christ taught that religion and that morality, and they quote some isolated sayings of the New Testament, like the one Smith just quoted, to prove it. For example, you are all making out nowadays that Christ was a universal philanthropist, the friend of everybody, without distinction, who is down and out. But clearly he was not that. His beneficence was limited to those who believed in him, and so were his blessings. On those who didn't believe in him he was most severe. He told them plainly that if they disowned him he would disown them—and harder things than that. He never said, as people are always asserting he did, that all men are equal brothers, and that God is the Father of every being who wears a human form. The Christ who is supposed to have said these things is a creation of the social imagination of modern times, and is not to be found anywhere in the New Testament. Universal philanthropy may be good; but it is not in the Gospels. They show scant mercy to the unbelieving Jews."

"Well," said Smith, "all I know about it is this: if the Labour Movement isn't Christian, Christianity may consider itself done for."

This remark of Smith's started us off on a new line, in following which, I am sorry to say, my conduct in the chair became rather lax. Unfortunately I forget most of what was said. I can only remember that the Professor and I began defining our terms and, after defining both Labour and Christianity in our own way, assented to Smith's last re-

mark as entirely sound. After that we drifted on —and here again I have lost the connection, though I think it was quite a natural one—to a talk about the future life.

"My experiences in Copenhagen," said the Professor, "have set me thinking anew about the problem of a future life. I wonder if people would be so eager for survival if they realized that on reaching the silent shore of the next world they will be absolutely penniless and naked and entirely dependent on whatever charity may exist in those regions. Of course there may be those who will help us out as Smith has helped me. But that hardly improves the prospect for people who have had their own way in this world. It means the complete loss of one's independence and therewith, I suppose, of one's power of self-determination. To a rich man the prospect of being landed in a new world, with nothing in his pocket, with no pocket to have anything in, and with no means of getting a remittance from his banker, must be appalling. I had a foretaste of it in Copenhagen."

"But somebody will come to his assistance," I said. "That makes all the difference."

"A very humiliating prospect for a man of independent spirit, for that 'highly developed individual' you are so fond of talking about, especially if there is no possibility of his repaying his benefactor, as I intend to repay Smith as soon as I get my remittance."

"Bosh!" said Smith, and then, turning to me, "You're the most incompetent chairman that ever presided over a meeting. You haven't the foggiest

notion of the Rules of Debate. And as to sticking to the Resolution—good Lord! I withdraw from the House." And with that he took a bundle of papers from his breast pocket and began to read them, as though the proceedings were beneath his contempt.

Now Smith was a man whose vocation required of him the making of a vast number of speeches, and I had often observed in the course of our travels that his interest in a topic of conversation waxed and waned in proportion to what he could get out of it for platform use. If it promised nothing in that line it was 'bosh.' There are preachers, even great ones, whose interest in the universe is similarly conditioned; they have the eagle's vision for everything that promises a sermon and the bat's for everything else. We all live (so philosophers assure us) in "a universe of discourse" of one kind or another. In Smith's case the 'discourse' that defined his universe was, clearly discourse addressed to a Labour audience. That about which no Resolution could be moved, seconded, supported, and voted upon was about as near as you could get to his notion of the Unreal; the Real, on the contrary, being that which was amenable to the Rules of Debate, which lent itself to oratorical presentation, and so won elections for the Labour Party. This I think must have been the reason why he took so little interest in the scenery of Norway.

For some minutes the Professor continued to press his point about the future life, and I to parry it as best I could, his point being always this—that judged by the standard of values which Smokeover has

adopted for this world, the next could be nothing else than a place of torment. "So long as our standard of values is framed in material terms," he kept repeating, "the world of spiritual reality must be hell for all of us, and there is no difference at all between hell and heaven." The point was not easily turned aside, and my answers to it were beginning to flicker out when Smith looked up from his papers and said:

"As soon as you are done with your bosh, I'm going to offer a few statistics. You may have heard of the appalling condition of the workers in the foreign lucifer match trade—the sweated wages, the diseases they contract, the poisoning by phosphorus, the destruction of young life, and the dividends of 130 per cent. Well, I have the facts in one of these papers. But just hand me that box of cigars."

He took a fresh cigar from the box and proceeded to light it, the Professor watching him with a degree of attention which the importance of the operation hardly seemed to warrant. When it was over the Professor turned round and winked at me with a sly expression that I thought rather unusual in a moralist of his eminence. He had evidently noticed something that interested him. I was soon to discover what it was.

"Now listen to this," Smith went on, " 'statistics of mortality in the foreign match trade.' "

"Pardon my interrupting you," said the Professor. "But before you give us the statistics of mortality in the foreign match trade I should like to call your attention to the fact that you have just lit your cigar with a foreign match. You have a

box of them in your pocket, which you probably purchased for a halfpenny."

"What has that to do with the matter?" asked Smith.

"Only this: that whatever villainies you're going to reveal in the match factories I charge you before you begin with being an accessory after the fact."

"And how, pray, did you light your own cigar?"

"With a match out of your box."

"Then look down your own chimney before you sweep mine. We're both in the same boat."

"That boat seems to have two chimneys," I said.

"The boat," retorted the Professor, 'has *three* chimneys, and the third is yours. All three need sweeping. That is the very point I want to make clear before we embark on Smith's statistics. Now, Smith, go ahead."

Smith, taken somewhat aback by the Professor's interruption, laid down his papers and paused for a moment before replying, while the Professor, perceiving his advantage, pressed the attack.

"I'll lay long odds," he went on, "that the nasty cigar in Smith's mouth was made by sweated labour. Throw it into the fjord, Smith, and take one of mine. They cost half a crown apiece; I buy them at a shop in Bond Street."

"And I'll lay long odds," retorted Smith, "that the half-crown you buy 'em with, if you traced it back, came out of the pocket of the working-man, who needs it to buy food for his wife and children."

"You are only repeating that we are all in the same boat," said the Professor. "That has been admitted

by all parties. The argument doesn't advance. Give us the statistics."

"Look here," said the M.P. "I want to know if you fellows are in earnest. Or is it only a test match as to who can be smartest."

"We're in deadly earnest," said the Professor, "and to prove it we're going to search you, Smith. Turn out your pockets and strip. Show us your watch, your knife, your fountainpen, the lining of your coat, your shirt collar and your tie. Let us have a look at your buttons and your braces. I'll lay long odds again that two-thirds of what you have on your person at this moment are products of the system you are denouncing; that you've been buying them in the cheapest market; that you're a sharp bargainer, and in all essential respects an accomplice of the capitalist system."

"I consent to the search," I said, "only on condition that all three of us submit to it."

"That's only fair," said the Professor, and he began taking off his coat.

But Smith was in no mood to be searched.

"I don't deny," he said fiercely, "that I'm not as well dressed as either of you two snobs, and no doubt my braces and buttons are not up to Buckingham Palace standards. And I dare say my wife would cut a poor figure at a royal Drawing-Room alongside of your fine ladies, though a damned sight better wife in the eye of God."

I was struck by this sudden allusion to his wife, which seemed uncalled for. I remembered a story I had heard (and who has not heard it with emotion?) about Mrs. Smith: how, every day during

the nine months of the Labour Government, punctually at twelve o'clock that wise and admirable woman was to be seen on the steps of Smith's office in Whitehall, with a basket on her arm, and in the basket a nice hot dinner for Smith, a rabbit stewed in onions, or it might be a beef-steak, a suet pudding with treacle, and a boiled swede turnip, of which vegetable Smith was desperately fond, and which I had several times heard him demanding from bewildered waiters in Scandinavian hotels, Sweden apparently being the one country in Europe where swede turnips are unobtainable.

"And I'll tell you another thing," Smith went on still more fiercely. "If some people had said to me what you have just said, I shouldn't argue with them: first, because such people are not worth arguing with, and, second, because I should have another sort of answer. Somebody would get a crack in the eye."

"I agree with Smith," said I, "that all this about braces and buttons is snobbish, not to say indecent; and though I'm not a pugilist, as Smith was before the Paradise Division elected him, I should certainly *like* to give a crack in the eye to anybody who based an argument on the inferiority of my buttons and braces. Only I must say that Smith lost ground when he dragged our wives into the picture. *He* deserves a crack in the eye for that."

"I apologize for the wives," said Smith.

"I apologize for the braces and buttons," said the Professor.

"Good!" I cried. "Now, Smith, the next time your Federation is out for a strike tell them how

nicely we settled this ugly little affair and advise them to settle up with the employers in the same spirit. Man, it would make a fine subject for a speech."

I could not have chanced upon a more fortunate remark. It evidently chimed in with something Smith had been thinking about while the Professor and I were talking 'bosh.' The improvement of his temper was instantaneous. He showed it by picking up the half-crown cigar, which the Professor had left within reach, and absent-mindedly lighting it with another Swedish match, the one he had lit before having mysteriously disappeared.

"No," he said quietly, between puffs at the new cigar, and as though talking to himself. "Wouldn't do. Couldn't be worked in. Might do for a sermon. But not for a speech—no! Nothing in it."

"Smith," I said, "you've had immense experience in public speaking. What kind of subject, in your opinion, leads up to the best speeches?"

"*Fighting* subjects, unquestionably," answered Smith. "Subjects with plenty of kick in them. Subjects that make you do *that*"—and he hit out straight from the shoulder, his fist coming within three inches of my face—a hairbreadth escape, so to say, from total annihilation.

"But couldn't you get a good speech out of 'peace and reconciliation'?" I asked, on recovering from the shock.

"Not unless I was *fighting* for them. I've made lots of speeches on 'peace and reconciliation' in my time. In fact I'm going to make one as soon as I get home, and was thinking about it not many

minutes ago. And I mean to show up the foreign policy of the Government to a tune that'll make 'em dance. Why, do you know, that scoundrel, Lord——"

"But——" said the Professor.

"Oh, yes," broke in Smith, "I know what you're going to say. Don't suppose I haven't heard all *that* fifty time before! 'Bellicose pacifists,' 'non-resistance with plenty of punch in it,' and all the rest of your silly, logic-chopping Cambridge jokes. But if you think the workers are going to be turned a hair's-breadth from their purpose by that kind of fooling, let me tell you you are making the mistake of your life. We mean *to put a stop to war*, and the nastier we make ourselves the sooner the job will be done—and that's all we care about. And a good many people will get hurt before we finish."

"And when the job's done," I asked, "what next?"

"More jobs of the same sort," said Smith, "and we shall go on till the last and the least of them is out of the way. Then we shall settle down and look about us, and decide at our leisure 'what next.'"

"The more you two fellows go on about peace and reconciliation," said the Professor, "the nastier tempered you will get. In five minutes you'll be insulting one another, and there will be more apologies. That's *my* answer to the question 'what next.' I lay it down that 'peace and reconciliation' is not a subject to be discussed between gentlemen. And now return to the original subject. Smith, be good enough to explain to us how you, as a reformer of the social system, justify your conduct in smoking a

cigar produced by sweated labour and lighting it with a sweated match."

"A child could explain that," said Smith. "First: I light a sweated cigar with a sweated match—granted. Second: the sweated cigar that I light with the sweated match helps me to think out my speeches, and soothes my nerves after I have made 'em, so that I'm ready for more next day. Third: my speeches show the workers how to send the diabolical system, that has produced the sweated articles, to everlasting smash. Result: the devil gets hoisted with his own petard—which is the only way of hoisting him properly; and a mighty fine sight it is to see the old gentleman go up."

"The other day," I remarked, "I heard a Socialist friend of mine justify his income of £25,000 a year on exactly the same principle."

"Then you have heard a sound case proved twice over," snapped Smith.

"And I too," interposed the Professor, "seem to have heard an echo of the same argument in ecclesiastical circles. Something about 'reforming the Church from within.' "

"Is that another instance of 'hoisting the devil with his own petard'?" I asked.

"The devil," said the Professor, "*enjoys* being hoisted with his own petard. In fact, 'the feeling of being hoisted with my own petard' is the devil's definition of 'happiness.' Of course I am speaking of the Christian devil—I mean, of course, the devil of the Christians. He manufactures petards for that very purpose, and when he can't get anybody else to hoist him he hoists himself just for the fun

of the thing. Explosions, of course, don't hurt him."

"What sort of nonsense are you Professor of?" asked Smith.

"The Metaphysic of History," answered the Professor.

"Then you can tell the devil with my compliments," said Smith, "that the Metaphysic of History is bosh."

"Leave the devil alone," said I, suddenly recollecting my duties in the chair, "and stick to the main subject. This affair of the sweated matches has roused up all my Smokeover nightmares. Will no one show me how to live an innocent life? I have read all Smith's speeches, I have been the round of all the churches and chapels in Smokeover, I have attended the courses of Social Ethics in our University, I have studied all the books that are written on 'Christianity and the Social Problem,' but none of them has shown me how to live a life that doesn't involve me at every turn in doing some injury to my fellow-men. Every time I put a lump of coal on the fire, or pour petrol into my car, or ring up the girl at the telephone exchange, or carve a leg of mutton, I become an accomplice to all the villainies and degradations and inhumanities that go on behind the screen of my daily life. The churches and the chapels tell me that I have only to follow the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount and everything will be straightened out. Apply that to the lump of coal, or to the leg of mutton—if you can! The Professor of Social Ethics is no better. The foundation of social justice, he says, is 'to use every

man as an end in himself and never as a means to our own ends'! Admirable! Then, as he and I are walking home together after the lecture, he advises me to buy an All-In motor-car, which he says is the best cheap car on the market. I have bought one, and behold the pair of us snorting our way through the universe in All-In cars, but oblivious of the fact that we are parties to the creation of a new slum area and the destruction of the last beauty spot for ten miles round Smokeover. Where, oh where, is a good conscience to be found?"

"'A good conscience,'" said the Professor, "'is an invention of the devil.' Congratulate yourself on not having one. The only people nowadays who have good consciences are scoundrels and hypocrites —and social reformers who think themselves entitled to go to what lengths they please in forcing other people to accept their notion of the 'common good.' A right action with no admixture of wrong in it, a wrong action with no admixture of right in it, has never been done since the world began."

"It takes a man to stand up to *that*," said Smith.

"It does: and that is why God created you and me. But I agree that Christianity—at least the Smokeover version of it—won't help you."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because the churches in Smokeover are far too anxious about their own fortunes to concern themselves greatly in troubles such as yours. They, also, are in a strait betwixt two—a declining taste for sermons on the part of the public and an increasing desire on the part of the clergy to draw large congregations—the thing I referred to last night. The

struggle for their existence as churches absorbs their energies."

"But what," I asked, "about the Foundation of Social Justice—'treat every man as an end in himself and never as a means'?"

"That's more hopeful—but only on condition that you make the right application of it."

"What is that?"

"This: the next time you have an opportunity of addressing your fellow citizens in Smokeover about 'the good life,' speak to them as follows: 'My friends, it is your duty to use me as an end in myself. It is my right so to be used by you. I renounce that right. I absolve you from that duty. I do this as an act of atonement. For a long time past, in spite of my knowledge that it was wrong, I have been using you as means to my own ends, by striking matches, by eating mutton, by driving an All-In car, by warming myself with coals which you at the peril of your lives, and under conditions unfit for humanity, have been digging out of the bowels of the earth, and I see no prospect of being able to act otherwise in the future. Every hour of my leisure has been a tax on your labour. And now I offer you an atonement, the only atonement I *can* offer. Make me as one of your hired servants. Use me as your instrument. Henceforth let it be forgotten by every one of you that I am an end in myself.' "

"Hear! Hear!" cried Smith. "That's a tip-top speech. It couldn't be neater put."

"But," I said, "it will play the deuce with Kant's Moral Philosophy if we all take to acting in that way. Consider the frightful tangle of cross-strains

that would result. How is it possible to treat a man as an end in himself if he refuses to be so treated, as Jesus and Francis apparently did? And if you do treat him as an end in himself, what is that but using yourself as a means to his end, which he from his point of view would be wrong in letting you do? Where's the difference between letting another man use himself for your ends and deliberately so using him yourself? By obeying the rule on your side of the arrangement you make the other fellow violate it on his. You are pulled both ways at once and the tension is unescapable—except for the scoundrels who have no conscience."

"Which is the same as having a 'good' one," said the Professor. "But never mind about all that. Go ahead with your renunciation of the right to be treated as an end in yourself, and leave it to the Professor of Social Ethics in Smokeover University to square it with Kant's Moral Philosophy as best he can."

A few more remarks in the same strain followed, and then it was that Smith, with a light of battle in his eyes and a bang of his great fist on the table, declared his determination to be 'damned' before he would ask any man to treat him as an 'end in himself.'

"I'm the poor man's servant," he added "and the next time I speak in Paradise I'll tell 'em what the Professor has just said, and if they don't like it they can kick me out. As for Kant's Moral Philosophy—well, I dare say you two fellows think yourselves the only people on this balcony who know anything about it. You're mistaken. There's a third, and

that's me. I've discussed Kant's Moral Philosophy with our men in the W.E.A. classes lots of times. And what I say to them is this; 'A man who expects other men to use him as an end in himself, and goes whining if they don't, isn't a man at all, but a skulker, and be damned to him!' Foundation of Social Justice, indeed! Why, any child could see that it's nothing but a capitalist dodge."

At this moment the bell for the midday meal rang in the lower part of the hotel. As we rose from our seats I noticed for the first time that the sun was shining and the great mountains visible on the other side of the fjord.

"Pity we didn't notice that before," said the Professor.

As we were walking downstairs I said to him, "The only escape that I can think of from the constant horror of doing harm to others is to turn hermit, and live in the wilderness among yonder mountains." And I quoted the lines:

> "O that the desert were my dwelling-place,
> With one fair spirit for my minister,
> That I might all forget the human race,
> And, hating no man, love but only her."

"Perfectly futile!" exclaimed the Professor. "For, in that case, you would wrong your fellowmen by depriving them of your company, to say nothing of the 'fair spirit's.' You have no right to make a hermit of *her*. She's wanted in Smokeover."

"I should have to go alone," I murmured.

"We could bear that," growled Smith.

"All the same," said the Professor, "it would be a mean thing to do. Stick to Smokeover and stand up to your 'tensions.' The Almighty was in the same fix when he created the Universe."

CHAPTER SIX

"Sex Passion, Cupidity and Death"—an Editorial Adventure

TO dining out, in the Olympian sense of the term, I am not addicted, having found the habit good neither for the body nor for its ghostly counterpart, the soul—at least not for mine. So long as a dinner is a dinner, well and good; but when it develops into a banquet, others may eat it for me—yes, though it be a banquet of the gods.

Not that I am greatly visited by importunities to join those high feastings. Most of my friends belong to the middle class in which I was born, and born, too, at a time when there was a real middle class to be born in, the Income Tax in those days being fourpence in the pound and family prayers the rule in all well-conducted households. Of this middle class there are still, thank heaven, a few harried survivors, whom neither Mr. Bernard Shaw's exposure of their hyprocritical morality, nor the inroads of the tax collector on their diminishing incomes, nor the policy of the Labour Party (the prime cause of millionaires) has yet deprived of standing ground in the universe. With them I often dine on roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, and an apple tart to follow, Sunday being my favourite day for that species of entertainment. But this can hardly be called dining out.

Occasionally, however, I get an invitation from some rich, great, aristocratic or otherwise opulent person who has picked up a book of mine, and is curious to see what kind of a fish the author of it may be. In this way I have formed a small circle of distinguished friends, of whom I am proud, and whose invitations I never fail to accept, save when they happen to collide with one another. Among these I would give the first place to the Jesuit College in Smokeover, where the company is the urbanest I know, the manners perfect, the voices melodious, the occasional silence deeply impressive, and the conversation always memorable; the second, to my dear friend, Mrs. Temperley-Shadwell, at whose house the adventure took place that I am about to narrate, and who never admits a cackler or a bore to her table unless, indeed, I happen to be, myself, the exception that proves the rule; and the third, to the household of a rich Quaker in Smokeover, where the prevailing want of conversation is just as pleasant as the copiousness of it is elsewhere, and where I was once most beautifully thanked by my host for having said next to nothing during the whole course of the dinner. Of my conversations with those low-voiced, charming and mysterious Jesuits I have preserved a full record, some of which I shall reproduce hereafter; here I will only remark that if all my distinguished friends, to the number, say, of a dozen, were to invite me to dinner for the same evening, I should decline the eleven in favour of the Jesuits, though it would be a near thing between Mrs. Temperley-Shadwell and them. I must add, however, by way of including the ex-

ceptional case, that if I happened to be overburdened with the cares of this world, neither the urbanities of the Jesuits' table, nor the prospect of strange adventures at Mrs. Temperley-Shadwell's would weigh with me for a moment against the divine peace of that Quaker household.

Not many months ago I was nearing the end of a hard day's work which had consisted in examining articles offered to a magazine. Perhaps I was not in the best of tempers. From an editor's point of view the day had been barren. In all the articles I had read there seemed to be nothing of real value. Nor did the prospect brighten when I came to the last in the pile. It bore the title "Sex Passion, Cupidity and Death."

I had often encountered that sort of title, and thought I knew what to expect. Moreover, I have to confess to a temperamental dislike of sex theories, of which I recognize only two classes—those that offend me by their nastiness and those that bore me to extinction by the methods they propose for 'spiritualizing' sex passion. On all grounds, therefore, I was prejudiced against the article before reading a line of it.

The name of the writer was given as Lady Wildwater, and a note accompanied the manuscript asking me to telegraph as soon as a decision was arrived at, a prepaid telegraph form being enclosed for that purpose.

I had not read half a dozen sentences before realizing that I was in contact with a powerful and penetrating mind, and the joy shot through me which

the fisherman knows when, after catching nothing all day, he hooks a monster at the final cast. In a few moments I found myself embarked on one of the most interesting speculations that have ever come my way, and I said to myself, in my editorial exuberance, "here is something that will make the fortune of our magazine."

For five or six pages this first-class matter ran on. Then, suddenly, in the middle of a paragraph, the style changed, and the writer seemed to be losing the road. More accurately, the mind at work would, from time to time, turn round upon itself and contemplate the thought it had just expressed as though it were a curious object in space, and this in a temper totally different from that of the preceding passage. One might compare it to a dialogue between two speakers, one intensely in earnest, and the other inclined to make merry over the earnestness of the first, with this difference, however, that while the more superficial would constantly retort upon the deeper mind, this last took no notice whatever of the jests and criticisms directed against it, but went on thinking its own thoughts in the silence, and breaking out again into utterances as soon as the other's commentary was finished, without any consciousness of the gap that intervened. The thoughts of the second and inferior mind, moreover, had no uniform character. Some were brilliant and witty; others were almost meaningless, having little connection with one another and no resemblance to the closely-knit and lucid argument that had gone before.

These two phases, the one of sense, the other, relatively, of nonsense, continued to alternate in

fairly equal masses to the end. It was a great disappointment. Clearly, nothing could be made of the document as it stood. Had the finer portions been cut out and pieced together, an essential link would have been lost at each of the junctions, the writer being strangely unaware that the link was missing. In particular I deplored the loss of the conclusion. It was lofty, of great importance, and deeply touched with the sadness of old age and with the sense of oncoming death. But it rested on invisible foundations and would have been unintelligible as it stood. The profounder portions of the article, of which the conclusion was the profoundest, resembled a stream which plunged underground at regular intervals, these being filled with a kind of mocking commentary on what has just been written. I was familiar enough, of course, with the occasional lapses of good writers on to lower levels of performance, but I had never encountered an instance quite so curious as this, and I was greatly puzzled to account for it.

At first I thought that the typist who had copied the MS. must have mixed up two independent documents. But this could hardly be, since the article, in the secondary phase of it, still continued in a loose and haphazard way to harp on "Sex Passion, Cupidity and Death," sometimes with a powerful touch but oftener, as I have said, in the manner of light and random improvisation.

Then it occurred to me that the article, written continuously on the higher level by one person, might have been tampered with by a second person, who had cut out certain portions and inserted the

commentary in their place. But it was difficult to understand how that could have been done without the first writer discovering it. Then I thought of a dual personality. But no hypothesis covered all the facts. On the whole I felt convinced that "Lady Wildwater," if she were one person, was well advanced in life, and behind the article the image formed itself of an old, very able and rather disagreeable woman. The mixture of seriousness and mockery seemed to warrant the last adjective.

But who was Lady Wildwater? "Who's who" would doubtless have answered the question, but unfortunately the book, at the moment, was not by me. I remembered, however, that I had seen the name once or twice in the Court News of *The Times*, so that I felt fairly confident that it was not a pseudonym. Beyond that I knew nothing about Lady Wildwater.

It so happened, however, that I was due that evening as the guest at a large dinner-party in London given by my friend Mrs. Temperley-Shadwell, and I knew that if anybody could give me information about Lady Wildwater it was she. So, without making further inquiries, I telegraphed that the article was not accepted and hurried off to catch the London train. On the way my mind became deeply preoccupied with the mystery, to a degree which the real importance of the matter hardly accounts for.

As I passed up the staircase, still in a muse, a flunkey handed me a slip of paper. "Your place at table, sir," he said, "and the lady you will take down to dinner." I glanced at the paper and—great

heavens!—saw coupled with my own name "Lady Wildwater"!

A moment later Mrs. Timperley-Shadwell was greeting me with that inimitable radiance which has brought the world to her feet. There is that in her presence, figure, voice, face, expression, nay in her dress and the way she does her hair which says to the beholder, "you and I can speak the truth to one another when we feel inclined." So I drew her aside at once, told her my story and just the difficulty I was in. She understood it perfectly.

"I knew Edith was going to write that article," she said, "and I'm very glad you rejected it. She oughtn't to be doing that kind of thing at her age."

"It was uncommonly well done in parts, and I doubt if a younger woman would have dared it," said I.

Mrs. Temperley-Shadwell looked puzzled, but the matter on my mind was urgent and I hurried on without giving her time to speak.

"Anyhow," I continued, "it's clearly impossible that I should take Lady Wildwater down to dinner. If there is one thing I dread and loathe more than another it is having to explain to people at dinner parties why I have rejected their articles; in fact the chief reason I go out so seldom is precisely my horror of that. And think of what this article was about, and the difficulty in explaining to an angry woman, who no doubt thinks me the most incompetent fool of an editor in Great Britain, why it was impossible—and with people all round listening to the conversation. For heaven's sake pair me off with somebody else."

"I can easily arrange that at the last moment," said my hostess, "by sending out word to the footman. But really I should like you to see Lady Wildwater before making up your mind. If after seeing her you are not content to take her down, wave your handkerchief and—(she mentioned an ex-Prime Minister)—shall take Lady Wildwater, whom he adores, and you shall take me."

With that she stepped forward to greet the next arrival, and I was left alone to contemplate the prospect that threatened me—for of course I knew that the handkerchief waving wouldn't do—the prospect of sitting for two mortal hours by the side of a dragon of seventy to whom I had telegraphed a few hours before "deeply regret cannot accept"; and I began wondering what the ex-P.M. could be made of that he should adore such a being. Then the Tempter, thinking me an easy prey, became busy at my elbow with abominable advice, and I was just in the act of taking him by the nose and wringing it (the only argument the Devil feels the force of) when the voice of the flunkey cried out from the door, "Lady Wildwater"!

Imagine my stupefaction when there entered the room not the formidable dragon I had pictured behind the article, but a tall, dark-haired, wide-browed goddess of not more than twenty-eight summers, every line of her breathing distinction. One glance was enough. "No change!" I whispered to the hostess as she passed me. "Introduce me at once." And I was introduced.

"I've been longing to meet you," said the goddess, "ever since I read in one of your books that passage

about" (I forget about what) "and especially since you sent me that telegram. Oh, thank you so much! I was in terror lest you should accept that article; in fact I hadn't a wink of sleep all last night." (I think this was a lie; she looked like one who had never known a sleepless night.) "I know I did wrong in speaking of those dreadful things in that mocking way. But I did it in trying to do right. And that's always the way. The higher the goal you aim at the more wrong you have to do in getting there. That's a thing I have found out for myself, though they tell me it was taught by Christ—'leaving your father and mother,' you know—that unless you have the courage to do wrong you will never succeed in doing right—except of course in things that don't matter.—Oh, I'm so glad to meet you! And I was afraid they would give me to an ex-P.M.; there's such a lot of ex-P.M.'s about in these days; they always give me to one of them; and I don't care for any of them one bit, though I have to pretend I do; they are all so absurdly positive. And now *you're* going to take me down. I'm sure we shall be good pals almost immediately. I do love your books, except one which is quite too silly for words. I won't tell you which it is, because I don't want to argue. I hate arguing because it makes people so insincere. Don't you think so?"

The torrent went on, leaving me no chance to get in a word; all kinds of queer opinions shot out with 'don't you think so's' at the end of them. "A strange mixture," thought I, "half schoolgirl and half something else not easy to define. But I doubt if she wrote a sentence of that article. How could

such a scatter-brain produce a closely-knit and consecutive argument? Or even a bit of one? I must get to the bottom of this."

We were interrupted by another name called out from the door—"the Right Honourable Harold Smith," and in walked my old acquaintance, the Labour Member for the Paradise Divisions of Smokeover, stiff as a ramrod in his new evening suit, his shirt-front sticking out like a cuirass.

"Oh, there's dear Mr. Smith!" cried the goddess. "I simply love him! I've heard all about the sweated matches—he told me at the King's garden-party last week.—Paradise Smith, I call him. Don't you think the name just suits him? He has such a firm grip on the elements of life—don't you think so? Oh, Marjory (this to our hostess), you *have* put Mr. Smith on the other side of me at table, haven't you? Oh, that's all right! You angel! The editor on one side and my dear Paradise on the other! It will be just heavenly! I do so want to talk to Mr. Smith about sex-passion and hear what the editor has to say. We *must* get the Labour Party interested in sex-passion—don't you think so?"

"Lady Wildwater," I said, "we are not going to discuss sex-passion to-night."

"Oh yes, we are," she replied. "We're going to discuss just what I want to discuss," and her beautiful face set with an expression that made me a little afraid of her.

"No," I said. "We are going to talk about something else."

"What?"

Now I had not the faintest idea what we were

going to talk about, but I had to say something, so I uttered the first words that came to my lips.

"We are going to talk about cupidity and death."

"Cupidity and death!" she cried. "Oh, that's wonderful! Why, you're a thought reader! There's an affinity between us. Why, will you believe it, I was reading Dante when your telegram arrived—I was having tea all by myself—and thinking hard on cupidity and death and connecting them with sex-passion. There is a connection—don't you think so—between the three things? We can't talk about cupidity and death without talking about sex-passion at the same time. We can't disentangle them. They are all mixed up together. Think deeply about any one of the three and you find yourself thinking about the other two. But there's the ex-P.M. shaking hands with Paradise. Oh, *do* look at them! Aren't they funny? That goose the ex-P.M. trying to look as though he were not patronizing, and Paradise as though he were not being patronized! Why don't they say what they are thinking, so that we can all hear it—the P.M., 'I don't want to patronize,' and Paradise, 'I'll be damned if I'll let you!' It would be so much more sensible. And so much more statesmanlike. Don't you think so?"

"The art of statesmanship," I replied, "is said to consist largely in not saying what you think."

As we were going down the stairs to the dining-room I asked a question.

"Lady Wildwater," I said, "*who are you?*"

"Oh, how I wish I could tell you!" she answered. "I don't know in the least who I am, though I'm always trying to find out. Sometimes it seems as if

I were nobody at all. Sometimes I doubt if I'm even *real*. And sometimes a fancy comes over me that I'm only a ghost, and that I'm just haunting people. How odd that you should ask me the question that I'm always asking myself. It's the question of questions—don't you think so?"

This was not banter. There was real trouble in the tones of her voice.

As soon as we were seated at table I said:

"Lady Wildwater, I want to explain something. First of all, you must understand that my ignorance of the aristocracy is profound and I know next to nothing about the smart set."

"I don't belong to it," she said quickly, "at least not in my deeper self."

"Well, what I want you to understand is this. Before I met you just now I had got it firmly fixed in my mind that you were an old woman, very able and decidedly unpleasant."

"I suppose it was my article that made you think that."

"Yes."

"And you were entirely right," she said; "in my deeper self I am an old woman, very able and decidedly unpleasant. My superficial self is the thing that came into the drawing-roow—the thing you see now. But there's a deeper one than that."

"Probably most people prefer your superficial self," I said.

"The ex-P.M.'s do, and that's why I hate them. Yes, most people do. But which do you prefer?"

"I have not yet been introduced to your deeper self," I replied. "When that has been done I shall

probably prefer you in neither character, but in both. I doubt if your two selves are mutually exclusive. Introduce me to your deeper self at once."

"That's easily done. But before I do it I must explain something which I shall not be able to explain afterwards. It was my superficial self that married my husband; my deeper self has never been married to anybody, and never will be—unless," she added, with a look that puzzled me, "it gets married to *your* deeper self before we leave the table. In which case you will find yourself married to an old woman, very able and decidedly unpleasant. I hope you like the prospect."

"I don't like it at all," I said, "but, tell me, which of your two selves wrote that article?"

"My deeper self, of course. But the other one would keep butting in. You see, I'm young and old at the same time. Whichever is uppermost, the other is always there, and the strain between the two is sometimes almost more than I can bear. It makes me do wrong in order that I may do right."

"What wrong?" I asked.

"Hundreds of wrongs. One of them is champagne, and another is cigarettes. Champagne wakes my deeper self into activity—makes me old, very able and decidedly unpleasant—and the cigarettes keep it up."

"Shocking!" I cried. "You'll be a mental and physical wreck in five years."

"I don't care. But I'm not as bad as you think. As for the champagne, I simply loathe the stuff. I never take more than one glass; but that does the trick."

A moment later the waiters were pouring champagne into the glasses. "Fill mine to the very top," she said. When that was done she drained the glass to the bottom, making a wry face as though she were swallowing nauseous medicine.

"And now," she said, "I am going to introduce you to my deeper self."

Then a change passed over her which I had often noticed in a lesser degree as a phenomenon at dinner-parties—the gradual *aging* of the faces round the table as the muscles relax under the influence of wine. In her the change was sudden, startling and complete. She become transfigured, but in a way which reverses the ordinary fashion of conceiving such things. Outwardly regarded it was a change for the worse. Her figure stiffened, her mouth became set and hard, the brilliance of her colour vanished, the great eyes lost their lustre and sharpened, and I saw faint lines across her brow. I do not say that she was suddenly transformed into an old woman, but rather into the kind of young woman who strikes the beholder as *growing old*, as losing all that makes her young. Nor do I say she ceased to be beautiful, for there are many kinds of beauty. But the radiance and the glory of youth were gone. It all happened in a moment. And to my great astonishment. For though I had known women who would drink champagne to make themselves younger (with questionable success), this was the first time I had seen it deliberately used for the opposite purpose, and that with an effect so instantaneous.

"Now," she said, speaking in a changed voice, "we can tackle sex-passion. And first, as to the

relation to cupidity and death. The relation to cupidity is obvious; the two are variant expressions of the same propensity, especially in their lower forms. But the relation to death is more subtle. Death of course is the thing that waits for us round the corner, and most of our life is a struggle to keep the corner between us and it. But love looks round the corner and sees death there. Love never marries."

"*What!*" I cried.

"Never marries. What marries is sex-passion in some inferior form—not necessarily the lowest—before its transfiguration into love. Love knows what is waiting round the corner, foresees the tragic interruption in store for the beloved, and assents to marriage only because it has to do wrong in order to do right. 'Life must be continued,' says love, 'but hearts must be broken on the way.' Love is the grand interpreter of Death, and Death reciprocally of Love. Shelley knew that.

> " 'All things that we love and cherish,
> Like ourselves must fade and perish,
> Such is our rude mortal lot—
> *Love itself would, did they not.*'

Do you catch the force of that last line?"

"Oh yes, I see plainly enough what he means."

"Shelley is my favourite poet," said Lady Wildwater, "because he was young and old together, as I am. His genius flamed at the point where youth and age met in his soul. Here is another he wrote when he was only twenty-eight, my age, and yet it is an old man's poem:

"'O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb
Trembling at that where I had stood before,
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more!'"

The manner in which she repeated these lines enhanced their beauty and made me feel that Shelley was sincere, which some have doubted.

"Don't quote any more of that kind," I said, "or there will be a scene. I can't stand it. It stabs me right through. Anyhow, you can take my word that I know what he means."

"Ah, you may know what he means, but only a great lover could make the discovery—that love depends for its very existence on death. Dante discovered it too. He never married Beatrice—though he might have done if the chance had been given him, and then the *Divine Comedy* would not have been written—but his love for her opened the death kingdoms to his imagination—Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven—as nothing else could ever have done. Through the eye of his love for Beatrice he saw death waiting round the corner—and knew the significance of it."

"At your age," I said fatuously, for she was far

out of my depth, "you ought not to be thinking about death."

"Ah, but you don't know how old I am. I don't know myself. Sometimes I seem to be as old as humanity, standing on the very brink of things and bidding them an everlasting farewell; and all the time I hear my other self—the one that wears pretty frocks at Ascot—laughing at me for a fool. Mr. Smith"—she had turned quickly to the other side—"do you never think about Dante and Beatrice?"

Smith, who had prospered considerably with the titled woman he had taken down to dinner, looked bewildered.

"About *what?*" he asked.

"About Dante and Beatrice."

"No, Lady Wildwater, I never think about either of them. I don't know the story."

"Then what do you think about?"

"About a thousand things. For example, I've been thinking just now that I would gladly exchange all this"—he held up the menu—"for a swede turnip and a rabbit stewed in onions."

"So would I," said Lady Wildwater, "but we'll discuss that another time. Just now the editor and I have been talking about death."

"About death!" said Smith. "There's nothing in that, so far as I can see, to talk about. I've learnt to speak on most subjects of public interest at a moment's notice, but if I were put on my legs here and now to move a resolution about death, either for or against, or to introduce a Bill on the subject, I shouldn't have a word to say to the House, except to tell 'em there's nothing to be said."

"Would that all resolutions could be moved in that way," I interposed.

Smith shot a contemptuous glance in my direction, but I got an approving smile from Lady Wildwater that cheered me up. And I observed that several people within hearing had stopped talking to one another and were beginning to listen to our conversation. Taking no further notice of my remark, Smith went on:

"I want Lady Wildwater to tell me how to begin a speech on death."

"You would begin by telling the meeting all about Dante and Beatrice."

"And who were they?"

"Well, it happened ages ago. Dante fell in love with Beatrice; she died; and his love for her gave him the key to life and death."

"Thank God that nothing of that kind ever happened between my wife and me!" said Smith.

"Champagne, sir?" said a footman from behind, and a gloved hand thrust a bottle over Smith's shoulder.

"No! Take the stuff away! Give me some water," roared Smith. Then quietly to Lady Wildwater: "Tell me what your pretty story about Dante and his young lady is to lead up to. What's the resolution? What are we going to vote on? Is it to make the audience laugh or to make 'em cry?"

"Neither. It's to make them *think*, which is the last thing they are normally inclined to do. And there are three things for them to think about—cupidity, sex-passion and death. Mr. Smith, you are going to tell them, in your next speech, that when

all their resolutions have been voted on and all their Bills passed into law, cupidity, sex-passion and death will rule the world in spite of them, and the general happiness of mankind will be pretty much what it is to-day. You are to end up by saying that what they all want is education, and that they must begin by reading the Divine Comedy, which is about Dante and Beatrice, that the W.E.A.'s must all start with *that*, because it will teach them to be masters of cupidity, sex-passion and death, which are now masters of *them*."

"It's no use talking 'comedy' to a Labour audience," said Smith. "They'd suspect you were going to sneer at 'em. I've seen that game played before. You'd be howled down at once. We're in grim earnest."

"So was Dante. His passion for Beatrice showed him the meaning of death and that broke the power of his cupidity."

"We know a better way of breaking the power of cupidity than that," said Smith. "A crushing income tax with corresponding death duties to begin with; a capital levy to follow; and the complete nationalization of capital to wind up with."

"And when you've done all that," said Lady Wildwater, "sex-passion and cupidity will bring you back in a generation to the point from which you started, and death will make fools of you all."

"I don't see that," said Smith; "the morals of the workers are fifty per cent. cleaner than those of the idle rich, though, mind you, I don't say the workers are all plaster saints, and I don't want them to be neither, so long as they give up the drink. And as

to death, it's no harder to die with only a panel doctor to poison you, and nobody standing by but your old woman mopping her face with a dirty rag, than if you snort it out in a palace with all the King's physicians feeling your pulse, and three trained nurses giving you oxygen and the whole family by the bedside wondering how many hundred thousand you'll cut up for."

I waited for the reply; but it did not come. The tears were swimming in Lady Wildwater's eyes and it seemed to me that the radiance of youth was beginning to return to her. Presently she smiled, but said nothing.

"You see it's this way," said Smith. "If you begin talking to the meeting about death they'll think your next point will be about *heaven*. Now that's a thing *we* can't and won't stand. Heaven's a place the workers have no use for. We hold that all this talk about heaven only helps to keep hell going full blast on earth. It's the earth we're out for, and we're going to sweep it clean with a besom. Let there be no mistake about that. Heaven makes us sick. No, it makes us *mad!*"

"When I go on the platform," said Lady Wildwater quietly, "I undertake to get the audience—workers, mind you—interested in heaven in two minutes."

"How?"

"I should say, 'Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: I am going to begin my speech with a definition of heaven from the Labour point of view. The heaven of Labour is a universal and everlasting strike.' "

"Wouldn't do," interrupted Smith, whom a footman was just helping to a slice of pineapple. "They'd think you were pulling their legs, and that's the very worst beginning you could make, though I dare say," he went on, as he sprinkled some sugar on his pineapple, "a few of the young chaps would give you a cheer. A practised speaker never *begins* by pulling the leg of the audience. Only green hands do that. There's one of our younger men who's always trying it on in the House, and I've warned him against it again and again. No. The right rule is this: *first,* get your meeting firmly hooked and well in play, and *then* you can pull their legs as hard as you like, and, if you don't pull 'em too hard, you'll turn a lot of votes that were going to the other side."

"I see you are a fisherman, Mr. Smith," said Lady Wildwater.

"I am. No man enjoys a day's fishing more than I do," said Smith, and a radiant look came into his manly face. "Some of the happiest days of my life have been spent sitting beside our river and watching my float from morning to night, with the larks singing in the sky, and my wife with her sewing under an old tree near by, and a nice lunch in the basket, and not another soul in sight. That's what I call real poetry."

"You must come down to our place in Scotland and have a day with the salmon," said Lady Wildwater. "But you will find it difficult to pull their legs."

Smith laughed. "Well," he said, "that's how to handle a meeting. Otherwise you'll have 'em

against you. No, Lady Wildwater, you haven't got 'em interested in heaven yet. Try again."

"Very well; what do you say to this?—'Ladies and Gentlemen: the heaven of Labour is getting the job well done.'"

"Oh, damn it!—excuse me—not *that* at any price," cried Smith, putting down the piece of pine-apple which he had just picked up with a silver fruit fork, and looking too disgusted to eat anything more, "not *that* at any price! They'd know you for a capitalist the moment the words were out of your mouth and they'd storm the platform."

"Then I'm done for," said Lady Wildwater. "I've no more definitions of heaven. Unless it be watching your float to all eternity and catching no fish."

"A sort of Nirvana," I said. "But let me make a suggestion. Try the meeting with the heaven of the cockney middle class."

"What's that?" asked Smith, with a fighting look in his eye.

"Going to the undertaker's and having an expensive funeral, with port wine and plum cake for the mourners."

"You got that out of Carlyle," said Lady Wildwater in a flash, "you are always cribbing his titbits. You do it in your books."

"No," I answered, "I didn't get it out of Carlyle. I got it out of Mrs. Carlyle, a woman of whom you are constantly reminding me, Lady Wildwater. You resemble her."

"You *think* so, do you? Well, you are absolutely wrong. Mrs. Carlyle made a mistake I have never

made. She married Carlyle with her deeper self and her superficial self remained unmarried till—till she dropped dead in her brougham. There were some lively tiffs in that household. Yet while their superficial selves were nagging at one another about the way the porridge was cooked, and all that, their deeper selves clung together like grim death, till grim death parted them and the old man's heart was broken. My man and I never quarrel."

"Lady Wildwater," I said, "you are a great mystery. But unlike some mysterious women I have met you *know* that you are a mystery and I half suspect you of consciously acting the part."

"And do *you*, Mr. Editor," she replied, "always manage to forget that you are an editor when you are editing your precious magazine? Were you not consciously acting the part of editor when you rejected my article this afternoon? And is the rejection any the less final because you consciously played editor when you rejected it? And do philosophers always forget they are philosophers when they are writing their unintelligible books? And is it not just *that* which makes them unintelligible? And do the critics never consciously act the part of critics when they are criticizing? And is it not just *that* which makes them unfair?"

"There is a difference," I said, "between consciously acting the part of a critic and consciously acting the part of a mystery."

"Yes. But the difference is all in favour of those who act the mystery. *They* can't help it; but the critics can."

"Well," I replied, "if I were a critic, consciously

acting a critic's part, can you guess what I should call *you?*"

"Something absurd. But what?"

"I should call you an 'impossible creation.'"

"And I, without being a critic at all, should instantly reply, '*Mr. Critic, you're another "impossible creation";* and that's proof positive that God created the pair of us.' And so is the ex-P.M. over there, and Mr. Smith on my other side, and all the rest of the phantoms seated at this table—all impossible creations, and therefore created by God. And here's a question for you, Mr. Conscious Critic. What kind of a thing is a *possible* creation?"

"A thing," I answered, "that is not a creation at all. It is a manufactured article."

"Good! Go up to the top of the class! An *unconscious* critic couldn't have answered better. I congratulate you on knowing the difference between a daisy and a postage stamp. Daisies are my notion of impossible creations, all different, and postage stamps of possible, all like one another. By the way, what's wrong with this dinner we're eating?"

"It's a possible creation," I said.

"Right again. You're a teachable editor. Anybody could make a dinner exactly like this provided he had the cash."

"Not if *you* were left out of the party," I objected.

"I am half out of it now," she answered. "I'm talking of the food, the cookery, the champagne, the silver, the dresses and all the blessed paraphernalia of gluttony. That's the curse of money. You can buy nothing with it but *possible creations*—and one

impossible is worth more than the whole shop-full. Isn't one daisy worth more than a million postage stamps, with a free portrait of King George thrown in on every one of them, only to be bashed out with a dirty postmark, as if we had all turned republicans, though the Americans do the same thing with their Presidents. Oh, but I'm getting silly."

"You are growing more impossible every minute," I said, "and more consciously mysterious."

Her last remark reminded me, by its sudden irrelevance, of half a dozen of what I have called "the secondary passages" of the rejected article. I now began to believe that Lady Wildwater had written every word of that document, both primary and secondary.

"You are right," she said. "I know very well that I am mysterious. And that deepens the mystery tenfold. Often I say to myself before going out, 'Now, Edith, you fool, don't go and act the mystery with the man who takes you down to dinner.' But the result of that always is that I act the mystery more outrageously than ever. And that again is a mystery I can't explain. I wonder if you can."

"It's unfathomable," I said, "deep as the universe. I give it up in sheer amazement."

"But you ought to take a shot at it. The Indians know all about it. Anybody can learn it by concentration—by Yoga, though nobody can explain it. Why don't you try Yoga? Put it in this way. Here are my two selves, the young and superficial one that wears the pretty frocks and is ready for any lark that happens to be going, and the old and deep one that is always thinking about death and goes

about in black. But that is not all. There is a *third* self behind these two that knows the difference between them, that pities their quarrels and heals them, carrying both in its arms and sometimes staggering under the burden, like Christ staggering under the Cross. Now what name ought I to give to that third self?"

"God!" I cried, "name it God!"

I spoke with vehemence, bringing my fist down on the table with a bang that caused a crimson shade on a candle in front to tip to one side and catch fire. Smith stood up and blew it out.

The whole company heard my ejaculation and instantly the room, which up to that moment had been full of noise, now like the barking of a pack of hounds, now like the rattling of the pebbles on a storm-washed beach, fell silent as death. Nobody spoke, nobody stirred, their eyes wandering round the room in search of the culprit. Surprise, amusement, contempt, resentment were depicted on this countenance or that, while the ex-P.M., who sat far down on the other side, was looking around him with an expression on his face that seemed to say "who the devil said 'God.'" And the other faces seemed to say the same thing.

Presently all eyes turned in my direction, for my embarrassment had betrayed me. I would have welcomed instant annihilation to escape the misery of that moment.

But Lady Wildwater got me out.

"Don't be alarmed," she said, "the editor was only *swearing* in answer to a remark of mine."

"Then next time he wants to swear in answer to

a remark of yours, as no doubt he soon will, tell him to do it *sotto voce*," said the ex-P.M.; to which Smith replied with a loud "Hear, hear." Whereupon the whole company broke into a laugh and resumed their interrupted conversations.

"Lady Wildwater," I said as soon as I was able to speak, "to my dying day I shall never cease to be grateful to you for that. But tell me one thing. Was it your young and superficial self or your old and deeper one that hit upon that way of delivering a fellow creature from the most miserable moment of his life?"

"It was both: sometimes my two selves act together."

"Ah, no," I answered, "you are surely wrong in thinking that. It was your *third* self that prompted you to say I was swearing."

"*By God*, I believe it was," she whispered.

She said this with great earnestness, and not another word passed between us till she rose from the table.

When the women had departed Smith said to me, "I've overheard a lot of your conversation with Lady Wildwater. I couldn't help it—she speaks so distinctly, and, my stars! won't she fetch 'em when she gets on the platform. Well, I heard all she said about doing wrong in order to do right. That's going to come in useful for—for our propaganda. I wish it had occurred to me when we were discussing the sweated matches."

"Oh," I said, "that's done with and we're not going to reopen it. I want to talk about Lady Wild-

water. You've known her for some time. What did you mean when you spoke of her going on the platform?"

"I can tell you something in confidence," said Smith. "*She's with us.* Nobody knows it as yet but my wife and me. *But she's in the Party.* And I tell you her ideas are revolutionary."

"They are, and the first effect of them will be to revolutionize the Party."

"Oh, never fear!" he replied with a laugh. "We shall tame her when he get her on the platform."

"I doubt if you will," said I.

Before the company broke up I had another chance of a word with Lady Wildwater. She was talking to the ex-P.M. in the drawing-room, and seeing me lingering near by suddenly left his side and came my way—which act of hers, judging by the look the ex-P.M. gave me, has not improved my relations with that notable statesman, already imperilled by my indecorous behaviour in thumping the dinner-table and shouting "God."

"Thank you for coming," I said, "for I want to speak to you. To-day I have committed one of the greatest errors of my life."

"I suppose you mean in calling me a mysterious woman."

"No; of course not. I shall never call you anything else. The mistake was in rejecting your article. For heaven's sake let me have it back again."

"Never! Our conversation to-night has finished that for good and all. I shall never publish any-

thing till my *third self* has a hand in it, and it had none in that."

"Then mind," I said, "that your third self 'has a hand in it' before you go on the platform."

She looked me full in the face and nodded.

I saw her again for a moment as she was entering her car in the street below. Pausing with one foot on the step she turned to me and said:

"To-night you have told me a true thing about God. And you are the first man who ever did. Good night."

She stepped into the car and disappeared. I have never seen her since. And I shall see her no more. She has gone where the sight of these eyes cannot follow her.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Day's Work in Smokeover

WHEN the lark rises with the flush of dawn most of us in Smokeover are abed; when the evening shadows fall, and the owl takes her melancholy flight, we switch on the electric current and the sky glows for miles around with the reflected illumination. In the interval between the birds we ply our industries with various degrees of zeal, vigour and decisiveness.

Smokeover, taken in the broad and large, is a far more cheerful city in the evening than in the morning. In the early hours, when business starts, the tone is pitched in a minor key; this changes to the major as the day wears on. At the dinner hour there is a marked increase of liveliness, and at five o'clock, when the teashops are crowded and the waitresses run off their legs, the tune has become quite merry. After that the revelries begin. In the evening we sing like the lark, or listen to singers; in the morning we hoot like the owl, mostly by steam.

No observer can overlook the different expression on the faces of the crowds which pour out of the trains serving our suburban areas, between eight and nine of the morning, as compared with the expression in the same faces on the return journey, between

five and six of the afternoon. The reason is, of course, that in the morning we have the day's work before us and in the evening we have it behind us. I would not say we are all melancholy when the day's work begins, but we are certainly more cheerful when it is over. We look forward to the hour for knocking-off and, when it arrives, are very prompt in putting our tools away and slipping off our overalls or office coats, sometimes anticipating the due moment by an appreciable number of minutes.

In the same spirit we look forward to our annual holiday, which for most of us has a fortnight's duration, carefully laying by our money all the year round, and sometimes even working overtime for that purpose. Indeed, the prospect of our annual holiday helps to sustain us through the year, just as the prospect of knocking-off helps to sustain us through the day. By the time our holidays are due, generally in August, many of us have saved quite a considerable sum of money, which we do not hesitate to spend in making other people work for us, just as we have been working for them during the rest of the year. One of our statisticians has calculated how many thousands tons of coal have to be dug out of the mine and transported to Smokeover to furnish the steam power needed to carry us to our various holiday resorts and to bring us safely home again. I forget what the exact figures are, but they are certainly large enough to call for a considerable effort on the part of the miners, the shovellers and the stokers, as we found out to our cost one summer when the miners very incon-

siderately struck work and many of us had to stay at home.

On our holidays we expect to be well served, well fed, well amused. As I have said, we have money in our pockets to pay for it. Nor do we suffer our enjoyment of this hard-won leisure to be marred by fantastic sympathies for the people who serve, feed and amuse us during the brief period it lasts. So, too, when we are off duty, if only for an hour. I remember being shocked and moved to remonstrance on hearing an advanced humanitarian, a friend of mine, and a convinced believer in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, scold a tired waitress at the rush hour, when he was off duty, but she was on, for not being quick enough in bringing him a cup of tea. But I checked myself on reflecting how often I had done similar things myself, both in Smokeover tea shops and elsewhere.

The state of mind which is more sorry than glad when the day's work begins, and more glad than sorry when it ends, has naturally led to a strong movement among us for shortening the hours of labour. This, a careless reasoner might conclude, would naturally lead to a corresponding decrease of our wages, according to the principle that the less time we work the less money we earn. The actual effect is the precise opposite. For is it not obvious that the more leisure we win, through the shortening of our hours, the more money we need, to get ourselves properly served, fed and amused by other people during the time when we are off duty? A man who worked for four hours a day, which is what some of our Smokeover reformers are aiming

at, would obviously find the rest of the day hang rather heavy on his hands unless he had plenty of money in his pocket to purchase the goods and services needed for the satisfaction of his tastes, hobbies, inclinations and desires during the long period at his disposal for those enjoyments. Thus, the fewer the hours we work the higher the wages we demand for working them.

Nor is this state of things by any means confined to our working class. Parallel to the movement among our working men for shortening the *hours* of work, and having its origin in precisely the same motives, there is a movement among our business magnates, and even among the professional classes, for shortening the *years* of work. What the hour of knocking off means to the working man, the year for retiring means to the business magnate, the doctor and the barrister; and just as the former is sustained throughout the day by the prospect of knocking off at five o'clock, so the latter is sustained throughout the years by the prospect of retiring at the age—shall we say?—of fifty; and just as the former will not work any more hours than he can help, so the latter will not work any more years than he can help. At that point are they not both in the same boat?

And at further points also? If the man who knocks off early needs plenty of money in his pocket to guard himself from boredom during the rest of the day, does not the man, equally, who retires at fifty need safeguards against the same contingency for the rest of his life? He too must make hay while the sun shines. His problem, like that of his

humbler fellow citizen, is to make the largest amount of money in the shortest time; for there is obviously no point in retiring, any more than there is in knocking off, unless you have something adequate to retire on—enough to furnish you with a steam yacht, a shoot in Scotland, a villa on the Riviera, or what not, as a means of whiling away the years of leisure that will intervene between your retirement and the time when, according to the tables of mortality, you are due to arrive in Smokeover Cemetery. "Why do you work so hard?" I recently asked of one of our most prosperous business men who seemed to me to be growing old a little before his time. "Because," he answered, "the harder I work now the sooner I shall be able to retire." So far as I can ascertain, the only workers among us who hate knocking-off and look forward to retirement with horror are the artists, not a large proportion in our total population. One of these, a gifted etcher, I once found weeping bitterly as he bent over his copper-plate. "My sight is failing," he said, "and I must give up." He died soon afterwards.

How much of the work of Smokeover, in all classes of the community, is motived by the desire to escape from work our statisticians have not yet been able to compute. It is certainly very large. For the work of Smokeover, in its manifold varieties, is not, on the whole, of such a kind that human nature can reasonably be expected to be in love with it, to be glad when it begins, sorry when it ends, eager to do it for its own sake and to have as much of it as possible to do. Many of our citizens declare, indeed, not without reason, that this para-

doxical state of things is good for trade, pointing to the fact (which no student of Smokeover will question) that the more leisure people have in our city the more work there is to be done by somebody, while the more time they gain by the use of time saving machines, such as telephones and motor cars, the more they have at their disposal for keeping their neighbours busy.

That our interests in this matter are not altogether in harmony is, of course, obvious; there is a fierce pull both ways, or rather, many ways at once. In the strained relationships thence arising (we call them 'problems' in Smokeover) we live, move and have our being, and our city becomes, in consequence, one of the busiest on earth.

Our local Bard, in his *Resurrection of Smokeover*, which is the most elaborate of his effusions, though our Professor of Criticism condemns it as a propagandist document, and not poetry at all, has certainly managed to provide us with much food for thought in connection with this matter. He declares—I am paraphrasing his verses, which our Professor says is the only way to get at their meaning—that the Resurrection of Smokeover, to which all good men are looking forward, will be accomplished, not primarily in our churches and chapels, but in our factories and workshops; and the first sign of its coming will be a change in the character of the day's work. Having developed this proposition in a very picturesque manner, our Bard's verses trail off into an account of the 'Common Will' of Smokeover, which he says is quite distinct from the wills of the individual citizens, all of this being evidently borrowed

from a recent work on 'the Common Will' put out by our Professor of Social Ethics. This is the most tiresome part of the poem.

But relief comes with the sudden explosion of his main thought, which is this—that the Resurrection of Smokeover will not take place, and cannot take place, until the 'Common Will' of the city has freely consented *to be crucified beforehand*, abandoning its dream of earthly comforts to be had on easy terms, and ceasing, for the time being, to concern itself with higher wages, shorter hours, happy leisure or such-like agreeable objectives. Then follows a venomous attack on the churches and chapels. Our poet accuses them of encouraging Smokeover, in its corporate character, to believe in the possibility of Resurrection *without Crucifixion*, which he describes as a base adaptation of the Christian religion to modern pusillanimity and a shallow dodge for drawing congregations. For our political institutions his contempt is hardly less than for our churches and chapels. Democracy, he says, is a futile device for making medicine do the work of surgery, a trusting to old wives' remedies and soothing syrups, when we ought to be bracing our nerves to face the knife and the forceps, to have our offending members cut off without chloroform, as the one and only cure for the maladies of the body politic. Such is the first Canto of the poem. The second bears the title "Smokeover on Golgotha," a nightmare picture of the city under torture, so painful and (it must be added) so unorthodox that citizens of substance and consideration keep the poem locked up from the younger members of the family. After this we

emerge into the fairer scenes of the Smokeover-which-is-to-be—the last Canto. And here it is that our Bard puts in a touch, which, whatever our Professor of Criticism may advance to the contrary, proves that Smokeover has produced a Poet.

In the new and glorious Smokeover which is to arise hereafter from the labours and sufferings of our Heroes, the feature that stands out clearest, and which the Bard has exhausted his art in making clear, is the joy of the inhabitants on getting to work in the morning and their regret when the hour arrives for laying it down. He pictures the crowds, in that happy future, hastening to their work in the early hours as though they were going to a marriage feast, and reluctantly creeping home in the evening, but comforting one another as they go with the assurance that to-morrow will soon be here and the church bells again ringing for work to begin. For that is what the church bells do in the risen Smokeover. No more does the shriek of steam whistles offend the morning air, no more does the dismal siren, with its note of doom, summon the toiler to his unwelcome task. For, now, there is a belfry over every workshop and something like a church steeple to house it in, and every morning as the gates swing back there peals out over the city such a merry tune of bells as the world has never heard before, praising the Great Workman, and proclaiming to each jubilant worker that his day's work waits for him within, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Such is our Poet's dream.

By what Measures of Reform, Acts of Parliament, Steps of Progress, Stages of Evolution, or other

devices for mending the universe, this blessed Resurrection in the fortunes of Smokeover is to be accomplished, our Bard has not clearly indicated, being apparently content with a kind of mystic faith that the labours of our Heroes and Heroines will somehow bring it to pass. My friend, Mr. Harold Smith, who has read the poem at my suggestion, condemns it roundly as offering "no solution of the problem" and utterly useless for platform purposes, though he "agrees with the writer" that sirens and steam whistles ought to be abolished. For myself, also, I have to confess that belief in the coming true of the poet's vision is not easy, especially when I happen to find myself in the neighbourhood of the Corporation Gas Works, or of the Municipal Slaughterhouse, or in the Paradise Division, where the chemical factories are mostly gathered. Belfries seem to me out of place in such surroundings and the picture of the jubilant crowds marching in while the bells peal out the tune of "Drink to me only with thine eyes":

> "The thirst that from the soul doth rise
> Doth ask a drink divine"

is a picture my imagination cannot sustain. Coldly considered *The Resurrection of Smokeover* seems to me a work of artifice and not of art, the trick of it being to create the Smokeover of the future by turning the Smokeover of the present upside-down. For ages to come, for how many none can say, the fact will have to be faced that the majority of our citizens are more sorry than glad when work begins, more glad than sorry when it ends; that multitudes

are working with the object of escaping from work, busy with a view to retiring from business, and sustaining themselves in their knockings-on by the prospect of presently knocking-off. And if that is not a state of tension, what is?

Now the people who face this fact, and stand up to it, are the Heroes and Heroines of Smokeover, irrespective of whether they live in the slums or the suburbs, and they are to be found in both, though more I think in the slums. The people who evade it, or manœuvre to shift the strain of it on to others, are the runaways, the cowards, the hypocrites and the scoundrels. These, also, are to be found both in the slums and the suburbs.

How an opportunity for playing the hero came my way will be told in the next chapter; and how I lost it in the next but one.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A Jesuit in Disguise

I HAVE had to endure a good deal of petty annoyance in Smokeover from the sinister rumour that I am "a Jesuit in disguise." When the rumour first got abroad it troubled me greatly, for I was then at one of those critical points in life where it is of the utmost importance to a man's interests that people should take him for what he professes to be.

Naturally I took pains to repel the charge. But that only made matters worse. I soon found that my disclaimers, convincing as I thought they were, only furnished my traducers with deadlier weapons against me, being at once interpreted as fresh proofs of my Jesuitry. They were, said the enemy, precisely such disclaimers as an exceptionally artful Jesuit might be expected to put out. For example, I pointed to my wife and family as convincing proof that I was no Jesuit. To this the enemy replied by also pointing to what they called a "well-known fact," namely, that the Jesuits frequently provide their emissaries with a bogus wife and family in order to facilitate secret propaganda. After that I gave up attempts to repel the charge and allowed myself to become used to it. When people get Jesuit-on-the-brain there is no arguing with them.

I am told that His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has the same difficulty in convincing the diplomats of other nations that he is not a rascal, and that psychical researchers often encounter it in their efforts to prove that the mediums they employ are honest. Let both of these give up the attempt and get used to the difficulty. From the nature of the case it is insuperable. Even the admission that it is insuperable and the getting used to it will be interpreted as a fresh point against them, just as it has been made as a fresh point against myself in the parallel case of my Jesuitry. Putting on airs of resignation and pretending he is used to it is itself, of course, the cunningest feature in the disguise, and precisely what "a well-trained legal mind" would expect from a disguised Jesuit, an artful Foreign Minister or a fraudulent medium.

However, a new currency has of late been given to the old rumour, and I have been getting into various kinds of trouble, by the fact becoming known that I am on friendly terms with several members of the Jesuit College in Smokeover, and that occasionally I dine with them, *ex animo*, at their common table.

Indeed it has brought me within measurable distance of losing one of my best and dearest friends. This is Colonel Capenhurst, V.C. (retired), who, after many years of campaigning on the North-West Frontier of India, and performing prodigies of valour in repelling Mahsud raids and bringing in wounded men under fire, has now become a pillar of the Protestant faith and is devoting the remainder of his life to countering the Roman propaganda.

The trouble came about through a most unfortunate accident. I am subject to fits of absent-mindedness, and one day, having a large mass of correspondence to deal with, I made a mistake in writing out the addresses on the envelopes. One of the letters was to Father Sebastian at the Jesuits' College, accepting an invitation to dinner, and another was to Colonel Capenhurst acknowledging the receipt of his latest anti-Roman pamphlet. But in my absent-mindedness, or confusion, I addressed the first letter to "Colonel Sebastian, V.C.," and the second to "the Reverend Father Capenhurst, S.J." The letters also got transposed, and both the recipients were considerably shocked when they opened their correspondence next morning. Father Sebastian read the following: "My dear old fellow,—I have read what you sent me. And I have only one comment to make, which I hope you will take not unkindly. For heaven's sake abandon this absurd Roman business and devote your talents to something you really understand." But Father Sebastian's emotions were nothing to those of Colonel Capenhurst, who found himself addressed in these terms: "Reverend Father,—Only a Jesuit could have written as charmingly as you have done. But you are over-subtle and must forgive me if I don't agree with you. To quote your own phrase, I will 'show you up' when next we meet. Many thanks for giving me the opportunity. Most assuredly I shall take it."

The effect on my two correspondents was very different. Father Sebastian saw at once that a mistake had been made, and was even clever enough

to find out the whole extent of it; and when next week I dined at the College he told the story to the assembled brethren, with ornamental additions of his own which provoked much laughter at my expense. Colonel Capenhurst, on the other hand, was furious, and would no doubt have done me personal violence had he not taken to religion late in life. "It's not merely a vulgar joke," he said to his friends at the Smokeover Conservative Club, "but a calculated personal insult. The fellow is accusing me of being a Jesuit in disguise. And what further proof do you want that he's a Jesuit in disguise himself. It's what they always do when you get them with their backs to the wall. There's no end to their devilry. If Christian principle didn't restrain me—and I'm sorry it does—I'd give him the licking of his life."

Thus the relations between Colonel Capenhurst, V.C., and myself became embittered and complicated. And the thing troubled me.

Indeed the matter threatened to become rather serious. My unfortunate mistake in mixing up the two addresses gave rise to a widespread belief that Colonel Capenhurst was indeed a Jesuit in disguise, and all my efforts to counter the rumour and to check its growth proved as futile as were my previous efforts to exculpate myself from the same charge,—nay, worse than futile, as the sequel will show.

For it so happens that the postman who delivers the letters at Colonel Capenhurst's also delivers them at the Everstrike Vicarage, now held by that prominent Anglo-Catholic, Rev. the Hon. Cyril Penderghoste, the living having been in that family since

the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Now the postman is on very friendly terms with one of the housemaids at the Vicarage—and the reader may begin to divine the rest for himself. One morning at breakfast the Vicar remarked to his wife:

"Ever since that last pamphlet of Capenhurst's against Rome I've had a secret suspicion that he was a Jesuit in disguise. The argument was so feeble, so deliberately idiotic I may say, that it was clearly intended to damage Protestantism; and you remember how I said at the E.C.U. meeting that I wished the Protestants joy of their champion. I was convinced at the time, though of course I didn't say so, that Capenhurst was a secret emissary of Rome. But now I am sure of my ground, and shall publicly denounce him as a disguised Jesuit at the next opportunity. I have it on the authority of our postman, who is ready to give sworn evidence, that a letter was recently delivered at his house addressed 'the Rev. Father Capenhurst, S.J.' And I have heard a rumour that that editor creature—I forget his name and don't want to remember it—whom I believe to be the 'man of sin' foretold by St. Paul in Second Thessalonians—holds the same opinion."

"My dear Cyril," said Mrs. Penderghoste, who had been brought up in evangelical surroundings and always went to Confession under protest, "I am sure you would be wiser to say nothing about the matter. You know the same charge was brought against yourself when you introduced the 'Lauds to Mary' into our services."

"My dear child," said the Vicar, "you needn't be alarmed about that. If anybody ever charges me

with being a Jesuit in disguise I have only to say 'permit me to introduce you to my wife.' But the fact is notorious that a large number of Jesuits are now masquerading as evangelical Colonels and taking part in anti-Roman propaganda. Yes, I shall say my say whenever I get an opportunity."

Unfortunately his say was presently said at the Anglo-Catholic Conference, and the fat was in the fire with a vengeance. Of course I did my best to show up the absurdity of the charge against Colonel Capenhurst, and exerted myself the more because I was in a manner responsible for the whole affair. "How," I asked, "can anyone in his senses suppose that a man with Capenhurst's distinguished military record, a man who has fought for his country in I don't know how many battles, and won the V.C. for bringing in the wounded under fire—how can anybody whose brain is not softening suppose that such a man is a Jesuit in disguise?"

I might have spared myself the pains. "My dear sir," said one on the other side, in a tone of compassion, "you are strangely ignorant of the ways of Rome. Let me tell you this—and it is a point I have taken great pains to ascertain the truth of. These Jesuits are systematically trained to bring in the wounded under fire and so to win V.C.'s. The V.C. gives them an unassailable position in society. Many V.C.'s in the late war were won by Jesuits in disguise, who are distributed in a fixed proportion to each battalion. They rescue the wounded men with hardly any risk to their lives. For of course they have a secret code of signals. And whenever one of them goes out to bring in a wounded man he

hoists one of these signals; whereupon the disguised Jesuits on the other side order their men to increase their fire but to shoot in another direction. I have talked with officers who were at the front in the war, who have seen it done and are willing to swear to it. The whole thing has been most carefully worked out. No, my dear sir, your habit of thought is too imaginative. It needs a well-trained legal mind to see to the bottom of these scoundrels." To which a second champion on the same side would presently add: "Perhaps he's not as ignorant as you think. It's just possible that he has the best trained mind of the lot of us. For my part I regard him as damnably clever."

Now this last, the reader will please understand, was by no means intended as a compliment to my intellectual powers in general. It was intended as a veiled hint that I, too, was a Jesuit in disguise, and that my defence of the gallant colonel was only a subtle move in the game that he and I were playing in concert.

Thus my efforts to retrieve the consequences of my mistake have only served to spread the area of the disaster and to involve myself in the ruin—which perhaps is just. I said above that these efforts were worse than futile. For now the rumour is that Colonel Capenhurst and I are a pair of Jesuit conspirators, working hand in hand for the overthrow of the Protestant faith.

When this rumour was first brought to my ears I hoped that Colonel Capenhurst, on finding his name so frequently linked with mine on the same side in this nasty business, would come to regard me

as a brother in misfortune, and make overtures for the renewal of our old friendship. No such thing. The Colonel, who is temperamentally a choleric man, began threatening me with action in the courts for deliberately traducing his character. I need say no more about that aspect of the affair for the present. The reader will be able to find out from the newspapers all he wishes to know when the case comes on in the courts. I may add, however, that if Colonel Capenhurst carries out his threat to sue me for damages I am firmly resolved to bring forward the countercharge and sue him for damages in corresponding terms. I have already consulted my solicitors on the point and they tell me I have a strong case. I take this opportunity of informing Colonel Capenhurst of what is in store for him.

In the strait to which I thus found myself reduced, and knowing that my fellow Protestants would regard the whole affair as a just Nemesis for my want of definite principles, and merely tell me that it served me right (as no doubt it did) for tampering with Rome, I resolved to take my trouble to the Jesuit Fathers themselves and make a clean breast of everything. I knew that, though it might not be true that they were systematically trained to bring in wounded men under fire and so win V.C.'s, there could be no doubt about them being systematically trained to deal with difficult, tangled and delicate moral situations, a point on which I thought they compared rather favourably with my fellow Protestants, and had even written so in public, thereby exposing (so it was said) the laxity of my principles. My difficulty, I thought, was precisely

of the kind that ought to be amenable to Jesuit science.

Father Sebastian had very kindly followed up his first invitation to dinner by a second some weeks later. This gave me the opportunity I sought.

"Father," I said, when we were all assembled in the Common Room, "there is a point about the system of education in your Jesuit Colleges on which I should be glad if you would enlighten me, though if the question is indiscreet I will immediately withdraw it. Is it true that your priests are systematically trained to bring in wounded men under fire?"

Father Sebastian looked puzzled. But seeing that I was serious he asked me to repeat the question. I did so.

"Trained—to bring in—wounded men—under fire," he answered, repeating the phrases very slowly and seeming to meditate on each. "Why, yes. Broadly speaking, we are trained in nothing else."

"But I am using the words literally."

"So am I. In the most literal sense the whole of mankind is wounded, deeply wounded by sin, and the field on which they lie is under heavy fire from the Evil One and all his hosts. We Jesuits are trained to go out under that fire, with nothing but the shield of faith to protect us from eternal death, and to bring in those wounded souls to the place of eternal life. Oh, yes, that, in a very literal sense, is what we are trained for."

I was somewhat taken aback by this and had no apt reply ready. So I said rather aimlessly:

"But you get no V.C.'s for doing it, like my old friend Colonel Capenhurst."

"Ah yes! Colonel Capenhurst—poor fellow!" said Father Sebastian in the softest of voices. "What a stew the good man seems to be in! But I am not so sure that none of us gets a V.C. I think Ignatius Loyola got one. Only they call them J.C.'s *up there*."

"Ignatius certainly deserved a cross," I said, "and so does Father——" and with my eyes I indicated a young priest with a very beautiful face who sat by himself, quietly smoking a cigarette.

"Yes, yes. But don't mention his name. I'm glad you think that man deserves a cross. So do I. And he will get a cross—because he carries one. He will get the J.C.—*up there*. My dear friend"—and here he very gently laid his hand on my arm and smiled in the most charming manner—"my dear friend, if ever *you* are deeply wounded and there is none among your own people to succour you, I hope you will let *us* bring you in. We will come out under the hottest fire to do it. You have only to call, you have only to raise your finger, and we shall be there. And we shall bring you in to a place where you will be absolutely safe."

These words, or perhaps it was the voice in which they were spoken, moved me deeply, and I suppose Father Sebastian saw it, for he instantly changed his tone. Taking from somewhere about his person a small packet of the cheapest cigarettes—threepence for ten is the price charged by the World Tobacco Trust—he offered me one, which I took and lit.

"And now tell me," he said, "where you heard that we are trained to bring in wounded men under fire."

"I heard it from a friend of mine who professes to be specially well informed about your Order."

"What an ass!" said Father Sebastian. "Here, Conrad," he called to the young priest with the beautiful face who was still sitting by himself, "come and listen to a good story."

Father Conrad rose and promptly joined us at the small deal table where we two were seated. A cigarette was offered him from Sebastian's packet, and he listened gravely while the story was repeated for his benefit.

"I agree with the Rector," he said, "that your informant was an ass. But he had the gift of prophecy. I wonder if our friend here" (indicating me) "has ever studied the moral psychology of these wounded men who are brought in under fire."

"Yes," said the Rector, "that's an important point. You Protestants think too much of the moral psychology of the rescuer, of the V.C., and too little of the moral psychology of the man he rescues."

"I have thought about it a good deal nevertheless," I said. "Take the stock instance of Sir Philip Sidney, dying on the field of Zutphen, who gave his cup of water to the wounded soldier. What kind of a man was the wounded soldier who let him do it and drank the water?"

"The man ought to have done as David did with the water which the three mighty men brought him from the well at Bethlehem, that is by the gate," said Father Conrad. "He should have poured it out unto the Lord."

"He'll join us yet," said the Rector, and he again laid his hand gently on my arm. "You look on

both sides of the question. So do we. We make a point of it in our system of education."

"The difficulty is," I went on, "that these wounded men as a rule have no moral psychology to study. They are too far gone in agony and weakness to be moral agents in the proper sense of the term. They can only scream for help in the madness of their pain."

"As one day you may be doing yourself, my friend," said Father Sebastian. "I hope one of us will be there to bring you in."

"Perhaps he won't scream," said Father Conrad. "Some don't. They set their teeth and say inwardly, 'No man shall risk his life to rescue *me*.' Or the crucifix rises before the mind's eye and they say, '*He* never screamed.' Yes, a good many V.C.'s must have been *earned* in that way, but never *awarded*."

"They are the ones who get the J.C.'s" said Father Sebastian, and he looked significantly at Father Conrad.

"But about the wounded men having no moral psychology," Conrad went on. "Would you go the length of saying that our Lord, considered from the side of His humanity, had no moral psychology during the last agony on the cross? Humanly speaking, one would think that the physical suffering was so intense as to inhibit the moral consciousness."

I was not attracted by the prospect this question opened up before me. It was clear that Father Conrad was drawing me into a very subtle argument which I was in no mood, at that moment, to grapple with. So I resolved to turn the subject.

"Up to a point unquestionably He retained his moral consciousness," I said, "and I think the bitterest element in His pain must have arisen from the cowardly desertion of the disciples. Not one of them was present to see Him die—for I don't accept the Fourth Gospel on that point. By the way, Father," I said, turning to Sebastian, "I have had my doubts of late as to whether the twelve disciples had any real existence. I feel more and more their utter unreality as they are presented in the Gospels."

"I have often felt the same," said Father Sebastian. "But then you must understand that questions of that kind give us no trouble *here*. If ever you find them too painful, come to us, and we will show you how to get rid of them."

"But that," I answered, "would be screaming out in my pain. And Father Conrad has just told us that the bravest men set their teeth."

The two Fathers looked at one another and said nothing, and I saw that they, too, were now desirous of changing the subject. But I felt that they, and not I, were responsible for the *impasse* to which we had come.

"Ah, well," said Father Sebastian in his soft voice, "let us talk of that some other time. Let us give up a whole evening to the subject and prepare ourselves for it by fasting and prayer. To-night there is another matter I want to mention before you leave. The story has reached us that *you* are a Jesuit in disguise. *Are* you?" and once more he gently laid his hand on my arm and smiled.

"I don't know," I said.

Both the Fathers laughed outright, and, the moment seeming opportune, I gave a full account of my difficulty and of my unhappy relations with Colonel Capenhurst. This, somewhat to my annoyance, only served to increase their merriment, and I noticed that the other Fathers in the Common Room, about twenty in number, were gradually drawing round our table.

"Do you object to their hearing the story?" said Father Sebastian—for the whole company of black-robed figures was now within earshot.

"As you like," I answered.

Father Sebastian briefly recapitulated the main heads, and I have to record that for some minutes a scene of hilarity disturbed the wonted dignity of that Common Room.

Presently Conrad said:

"Since our friend here doesn't know himself I will take the liberty of answering for him. Unquestionably he *is* a Jesuit in disguise."

"On what grounds do you base your certainty?" I asked.

"Simply on this," he answered. "All men are Jesuits in disguise, *except the Jesuits.*"

"And the mission of our Order," added Father Sebastian, "is to help them to strip off the disguise, by which they hide the truth from themselves and show them, to themselves, as the Jesuits they really are. Come, my friend, let us help you to strip."

"I will talk it over first," I answered, "with my friends, the Quakers."

"Ah yes," said Sebastian of the quiet voice. "Talk it over with the Quakers. They are the only people

who give us cogent answers. Poor Colonel Capenhurst gives us no trouble at all. But the Quakers are different. They are really formidable. And the strength of what they have to say lies precisely in the fact that there is so little of it. But when you find, as you will, that their answers, cogent as they are, all break down at the critical point, you will come back to *us*, my friend."

"But are the Quakers Jesuits in disguise?" I asked, turning to Conrad.

"Most assuredly. And when they fail you, call for us, as the Rector says, and we will bring you in."

"But that again," I answered, "would be screaming out and I should miss the J.C."

"You had better scream out," said Father Sebastian, "otherwise you may get no C. at all."

"Either the J.C. or nothing!" I said. "God help me not to scream out! Good night."

I walked out into the streets of Smokeover. They were roaring with motor traffic, and the air reeked with the smell of burnt petrol. It seemed to me that I had walked out of heaven into the place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. As I passed the door of the Conservative Club I saw Colonel Capenhurst, V.C., coming down the steps. He scowled at me.

CHAPTER NINE

Peace and Reconciliation

SINCE writing the above I have become reconciled to Colonel Capenhurst and, needless to say, the pending action in the courts has been withdrawn.

My conversation with the Jesuits, recorded in the preceding narrative, had left me with a feeling of bitter disappointment. I had hoped that they would take my trouble seriously and give me the benefit of the moral skill, for which they are famous, in dealing with a situation of great tension and complexity. Instead of that I had got from them nothing but laughter and sallies of wit. On other points, indeed, the two Fathers had used words which gave me food for thought, but on the main point at which I needed help just then they had helped me not at all.

But I was mistaken in thinking they took no interest in my difficulty. The truth is they had taken it much to heart.

Not many days after our conversation in the Common Room, Father Sebastian came to me with a troubled face.

"After you left us the other night," he said, "I asked Father Gray, our Professor of Casuistry, to come to my room, and we discussed your problem till the small hours of the morning. Both of us

found it exceedingly difficult, Father Gray not less than myself. But the matter weighed upon me, for I had been mixed up in the mistake that led to your quarrel with the Colonel and felt that I ought to exert myself to bring about a reconciliation. I still have in my possession the letter you intended for the Colonel, and that, of course, if produced in evidence, would make it clear to any reasonable being that the whole affair arose out of a mistake."

"I was hoping you would offer to do that very thing," I said, "for it is the obvious way out of the difficulty."

"Yes—the way out of the difficulty, but not quite the obvious way. In a matter of this nature there are many considerations to be taken into account. It is by no means easy for a Jesuit to intervene in a quarrel between two Protestants, especially when the quarrel itself turns on a question about the Jesuits. You must admit that circumspection is necessary. A rash act, however well meant, might make matters worse—and worse for all of us. That is why I had no suggestion to offer at the moment when you told me the story. I felt that I must take time to think it over and consult my colleagues. But let me assure you that I am deeply interested in the whole affair."

"The complications of life are infinite," I said, "and our efforts to disentangle them often serve to increase the complexity. But what suggestion had Father Gray to make?"

"A rather good one, I thought. He suggested that we should draw up a statement of your position in general terms as a case in casuistry and pass it

round among our colleagues for their considered opinion. Of course they all know to whom the case refers; but that cannot be helped, since you allowed me to tell them your story in the Common Room. They are not likely to chatter about it outside. Here is the statement of the case as we drew it up."

He produced a paper and read as follows:

"A heretic is accused by his fellow heretics of being a Jesuit in disguise. The accused heretic retorts the charge on his accusers and alleges that the accusation itself is part of a Jesuit plot against Protestantism. The original accusers threaten an action in the courts and the accused threatens a cross action in parallel terms.

"Meanwhile a Jesuit has in his possession a piece of evidence in writing, the production of which would prove conclusively that both the original accusation and the counter accusation are baseless.

"Taking the interests of the Holy Catholic Church as the standard by which the issue is to be judged, what, under these circumstances, is the duty of the Jesuit holding the conclusive evidence? Is he to produce it or not?"

"And what," I asked, "was the answer of the College?"

"It was unanimous, but only in this sense—that on the data furnished it could not be answered at all. For example, it was pointed out that the Jesuit in possession of the evidence could be subpœnaed to produce it in any event, and this raised the question of whether he, knowing he could be subpœnaed,

should destroy the evidence in advance and of how, if he did so, he should answer when placed in the witness-box. A score of other possibilities were suggested. In short, we were asked to give much fuller information on the circumstances and on the personalities involved in the case. Accordingly Father Gray and I set to work on an expanded form of the problem. But we found that in order to remove all the 'ifs' that had been suggested, and to furnish all the relevant data, our statement of the case would run to infinity. Among other things we should have to mention your name and Colonel Capenhurst's, as well as my own, and write out the life histories of all three of us."

"It is always like that in questions of casuistry," I said. "In order to state your question fully you have virtually to answer it."

"Of course we know that very well," said Father Sebastian with a tone in his voice which indicated annoyance. "All questions that deal with fundamental things are answered the moment they are fully and properly stated. The best we can hope for in a question of casuistry is a hypothetical answer. But in this case the data were so complicated that even a hypothetical answer was next to impossible."

"Well, then, what did you do?"

"We agreed to submit the matter to Authority, and, of course, to abide by the decision. And Authority, without giving reasons, ordered me to produce the evidence at once and so end the quarrel between you and Colonel Capenhurst."

"Father Sebastian," I replied, "you must forgive me for saying that I am greatly astonished at the

inability of the Jesuits, who are reputed to be the most skilful casuists in the world—at the inability of a whole College of Jesuits—to give even a hypothetical answer to a question of casuistry when it touches the interests of their own Order."

"But I am telling you that the answer was given. Authority decided at once."

"Yes," I said, "but it was authority and not casuistry that gave the answer."

"Which is the only ultimate decision of anything that matters," said the Father. "But we must not discuss that now. I want you to hear the outcome."

"I am eager to hear it. And I profoundly hope you are going to tell me that the way is now open to a reconciliation between the Colonel and me."

"Alas, no!" said the Father. "Quite otherwise. Of course I obeyed orders. But with a misgiving, grounded on your own experience, as to what the result would be. In a carefully worded letter I wrote to Colonel Capenhurst that I had a piece of written evidence in my possession which would convince him that you were entirely innocent in the matter and that the whole affair was due to a mistake. I told him of the letter I had in my possession and offered to show it to him. He replied at once in terms, formally polite, which practically told me to mind my own business. If I had any evidence to produce, he said, an opportunity would be given me to produce it in court, and that any further communications on the matter should be sent to his solicitors, whose name he gave. Evidently he regarded my intervention as part of the Jesuit plot. I have little doubt that he would have dismissed

your letter as a forgery even if he had consented to see it."

"It is a great disappointment," I said. "But tell me this, Father. When you stated the case in casuistry, did you mention, as one of the possibilities, that the heretics might refuse to believe the Jesuit when he produced his evidence?"

"I urged Father Gray to insert it, but he thought it was going too much into detail."

"What a pity you left that out!" I said, "it might have decided the question at once. But now that is all over and done with. Tell me what I ought to do."

"There is only one thing for you to do," replied the Father, "and a risky thing, let there be no mistake about that. You know the Colonel lunches every day at the Conservative Club at one o'clock, when every table is usually occupied. He sits at a table near the centre of the big dining-room. Go to him there. Walk straight up to the table where he is sitting, hold out your hand to him and in a voice the whole room can hear, offer to apologize and explain everything. Remember that Colonel Capenhurst is a sportsman and a gentleman."

"That is a dangerous operation," I said, not a little staggered by Father Sebastian's proposal.

"Bringing in the wounded under fire always is a dangerous operation," said Father Sebastian, "and Colonel Capenhurst, V.C., has not forgotten it. Dangerous to the wounded man as well as to the other who brings him in. Do it nevertheless. It gives you a chance to win the J.C., perhaps the only chance you will ever get. And I believe you will

come through alive. The Colonel will respect your courage and will take your hand before you have time to begin your apology. Do it, I say!"

"I will do it to-morrow morning," I replied, though God knows that my heart sank within me as I gave the promise.

This conversation began in the early hours and lasted long. It was about ten o'clock when Father Sebastian left me, his words at parting being these:

"Screw up your courage and do it. The knot must be cut, and cut by the sword of the Spirit, and by *you* and by nobody else. And remember that Father Conrad and I will pray for you without ceasing in the meantime, and that we shall be on our knees before the Blessed Altar at one o'clock to-morrow. We shall pray for your courage and we shall pray for your success. But, above all, keep your mind fixed on the J.C."

That morning I lunched at my own Club, which is not the Conservative. It was crowded, and I had some difficulty in finding a seat. My mind was pre-occupied with thoughts of the ordeal I had promised to undergo next day at the other Club, and I confess that I quailed before it. When the waiter asked what I wanted for lunch I said, "I don't know," and he went away to look after the other members. Two or three of my friends sitting near nodded greetings to me, and told me afterwards that I made no response, but sat staring before me towards the doorway.

And here I have to record a circumstance which, though I hardly noticed it at the time, has since struck me as most remarkable. I have said that on

my arrival the dining-room of the Club, which accommodates about two hundred people, was crowded, for it was the rush hour. But in the very middle of the room and visible to all eyes was a table for two, which, for some reason, nobody had taken, though there was nothing to indicate that the two seats were reserved. It was at this table that I, on permission given by the head waiter, had seated myself, the opposite seat remaining vacant. And I remember observing, though I was too preoccupied to think about it, that every time a new member came in the head waiter, who was standing just inside the door, would point him to this vacant seat, and he, of course, would make a dash for it. Then the strange thing happened. No sooner had the newcomer taken a glance at me sitting opposite, taking hold of the chair at the same moment to adjust it for sitting down, than he would instantly thrust it from him, turn his back, and sheer off in another direction. Whether it was something sinister in my appearance or something queer in the chair that repelled him I know not. But the chair remained unoccupied and I continued to stare at the doorway.

Suddenly I saw the folding doors violently thrown open by a tall, broad-shouldered man, who rapidly thrust his way through the crowded tables, making straight for the part of the room where I sat. Great heavens! it was Colonel Capenhurst. On he strode as though he were charging a battery, the waiters with their loaded trays shrinking back before the onset. Finally he came to a halt at my table, held out his right hand and, in a voice of thunder that all the room could hear, called out:

"Shake hands!"

Overjoyed I leapt to my feet, and for a quarter of a minute he and I stood there, shaking hands, with the whole crowd, now fallen to a dead silence, looking on. Then he took the other chair and sat down opposite to me, at the table for two.

"You have ordered lunch?" he said.

"No."

"Then let me order it. We'll have the best lunch the Club can provide! I wish it was the Conservative, where we have an A1 chef—engaged him myself! A jolly good lunch, however, we're going to have! Only I'm not a member—had to get a friend to frank me in. Here, waiter, will you take an order from a visitor? All right. Have you got any turtle soup? All right. Bring that. And while he's bringing the soup, I'll explain things. By the way, you acted like a Christian sportsman in shaking hands before I had given an explanation."

"I want none," I said.

"You must have it all the same. It's an interesting explanation."

"Better to give it in the smoking-room after lunch," I said, leaning across the table and speaking in a low voice. "We can get a quiet corner there. In this place everybody will hear what you are saying."

"Let 'em hear it and go to hell—I mean to Jericho," cried the Colonel. "Forgive me for swearing. That's a habit I contracted in the army, and though I'm always trying to break myself of it, I can tell you it's no easy thing to do when you've got it in the blood, as I have, and the devil always

at your elbow whispering the words in your ear just when they come in pat."

I think that was the happiest hour in both our lives. For all I cared at that moment the Colonel might have sworn till the air was blue. And this is what he told me:

"The whole thing is an answer to prayer," he said, "the most direct answer in my experience, and I've had a good many since I left the army and turned to Christ. I laid the whole matter before the Lord—the whole ugly business between you and me. At first I thought the Lord was guiding me in taking my action for libel. But last night I prayed for three hours, and it seemed to me somehow, though I can't describe how, that the Lord was changing His front, beginning, so to speak, to work round on my flank, and I resolved to watch the movement very closely. Well, this morning about ten o'clock I was walking in my garden thinking it over, and still feeling the pressure on my flank, when all of a sudden I heard a voice within me, saying, as clearly as the voice spoke to St. Paul on the way to Damascus:

" '*Capenhurst, you're a damned fool.*'

"I tell you, man, I heard it, word for word, as clear as the voice that spoke to St. Paul—on the way to Damascus. And three times it was repeated —and each time with more emphasis on the 'damned.' I knew it at once as a voice from heaven. I said to myself, 'St. Paul lost no time and I'll lose none.' So without a moment's delay I found out what Club you lunched at, and got a visitor's order. And now here I am, and we're having a jolly good lunch,

and the turtle soup is as true to name as our own chef could have brewed it, and it's all right between us two, thank God! Shake hands again."

And we shook hands again.

"Capenhurst," I said, "did the heavenly voice happen to say that anybody else was a fool?"

"No, what do you mean?"

"Well," I answered, "it seems to me rather strange that the heavenly voice should have left *me* out of the picture. I feel rather hurt about it. Let us shake hands once more as a pair of fools restored to common sense by the grace of God."

And we shook hands for the third time.

But reflecting afterwards on the matter I have come to think that the heavenly voice may have spoken to me as well. And at about the same hour that it chose for speaking to my old friend as he paced up and down his garden walk. And in the same words, save one.

When next I met Sebastian I thanked him for the help he had given me and especially for his prayers.

"It is an earnest of what we shall do for you," he replied, "when you cry *de profundis*. This has been a mere trifle. More terrible complications may be in store for you. And remember always that Father Conrad and I are still praying."

"Father Sebastian," said I, "you told me the other night that you Jesuits were trained to look on both sides of a question, and praised me for trying to do the same thing. Well, here is a point for you to think over. Colonel Capenhurst said that on the night before our reconciliation he was wrestling in prayer for three hours. Now it seems to

me that 'up there'—to use your own phrase—there has been some conflict between your prayers and Colonel Capenhurst's. Both seem to have gone to addresses for which they were not intended, like the letters which caused the original trouble."

"Ah yes, ah yes," said the Father. "But *up there* they know how to deal with those complications."

I said nothing about Father Sebastian to Colonel Capenhurst. Nor will he read about him here. For he has now gone to the place where his V. C. has been exchanged for a more significant decoration, a place where evangelical colonels and Jesuit priests "walk together in glory among the Shining Ones" (as the good Margaret would say), smiling over their ancient feuds. I can never forget how Colonel Capenhurst forestalled me in winning the J.C., being more alert than I was in response to the heavenly voice. But I bear his memory no ill will for that, and can only say, with many misgivings, *sit mea anima cum illo.*

CHAPTER TEN

A Possible Cause of Strikes

IN a previous narrative I have told how, on a certain occasion, when acting in my capacity as editor, I rejected an article written by Lady Wildwater. I have now to tell how, on another occasion, I was made to swallow a dose of my own medicine.

Not so very long ago I received an invitation from the editors of an American magazine to write an article on "the Attitude of the Roman Church to the Labour Movement." Now I have a great dislike of writing about 'attitudes,' partly because everybody is doing it, and partly because I am not quite sure that I know what the word means, in the applications that are now being made of it, or that anybody else knows, for the matter of that. I have long thought—though of course I may be grossly mistaken—that people's actions are much more significant than their attitudes, these last being often assumed for the purpose of disguising the actions they really intend. I have known good men who loved to strike the attitude of villains and, alas, I have known villains who posed as good men. To assume that attitudes foreshadow corresponding actions, as some psychologists would have it, is certainly erroneous.

Thus my friend Smith, if you see him on the

platform or read his speeches in the paper next day, is as truculent a smiter as you would meet on a day's march, a man to strike terror into the hearts of the boldest. But if you see him in his domestic relationships with Mrs. Smith—that wise and admirable woman—or go with him for a day's fishing, as we shall presently do, you will find him warm-hearted, genial, sympathetic and charitable. If I were in a tight place—say, through not being able to pay the income tax which a Labour Government had imposed upon me—and wanted a temporary loan of fifty pounds, I believe that Smith (who has a little money laid by) would lend it to me without any security. And then my other friend (if he will allow me to call him so), Father Sebastian. His official 'attitudes' have little relation, that I can discern, to his true character. I have already shown the reader what kind of a man he really is.

And if this is the state of the matter in regard to men taken one by one, what shall we say when they are taken in massed millions? I simply know nothing of the 'attitude' of the Roman Church, nor of the 'attitude' of the Labour Movement, and should not attach much importance to my knowledge if I did. When I think of the Roman Church or of the Labour Movement in any kind of 'attitude,' some quite ridiculous image rises up before my mind and I have much ado to refrain from laughing outright. Which of course is not the proper state of mind for one who has to write an article, on an important subject, for an American magazine.

So I wrote to the editors saying that the word 'attitude' must be dropped out of the title. Let the

title be, I said, simply "The Roman Church and the Labour Movement." That, they cabled in reply, would do.

Thereupon, with a full sense of the gravity of my task, I set to work. But I made very indifferent progress with the article. The subject indeed was one on which I had meditated a good deal, and I had come to the conclusion, without communicating it to anybody, that unless these two, the Roman Church and the Labour Movement, struck up some kind of working alliance, there would be evil days in store for both of them, since they represent, unquestionably, two of the most powerful forces in the world at the present time.

But how could they strike up a working alliance? This was the question I set myself to answer in the article. I could not answer it. Every reconciliation of the two forces that I proposed to myself worked out to the same result—that the Roman Church ceased to be the Roman Church and the Labour Movement ceased to be the Labour Movement. I thought of my reconciliation with Colonel Capenhurst and wondered if the Roman Church would ever become reconciled to the Labour Movement in the same manner. It seemed most unlikely. And another thing. I realized, what had never occurred to me before, that the problem of the union of Rome with the Church of England, or any other Church, was a small 'problem' compared to the one before me.

In these distresses I turned to the books which deal with the subject, of which there are a good many. But they helped me not a whit. They introduced

me to a series of ghosts: first to a pair of 'isms' called Romanism and Socialism; then to the 'problem' of their relations; and lastly to the 'solution' of the problem. I knew, of course—as who does not know—that between these ghostly battles of the 'isms,' as they are written about in books, and the actual course of events in this tangled world of ours, there is no correspondence, and that predictions based upon the doings of such phantoms are never fulfilled. Perhaps I was prejudiced. For on every page of these books I met that blessed word 'attitude' which, as I have said before, is always an intimation to me that unreality is abroad. At all events, I laid the books down with a feeling that I had been reading about nothing real. My article was as far from completion as ever. Nay, farther.

Then another idea occurred to me which I thought, in the exuberance of the discovery, was a singularly bright one and which now, in a soberer mood, still seems to have a modest value. "Why not test the matter experimentally, as they do in laboratories," I said to myself, "by establishing contact between the Roman Church and the Labour Movement in the persons of representatives of each? There is my friend Smith, M.P., who is eminently representative of the Labour Movement, and there are my friends (I again beg their permission to call them so) at the Jesuit College, who are eminently representative of the Roman Church. Why not bring the two sides together, and study their interactions and reciprocities in actual being? Why not see how they get on with one another? That may give me a clue."

I must here interpose that the Jesuits' College is situated in the Paradise Division of Smokeover, not very far from the point where the chemical factories, which abound in that Division, come to an end; and I have a shrewd suspicion, which I hope the Fathers will forgive me for communicating to the public, that more than one of them voted for Smith at the last election.

It seemed to me, therefore, that I should be acting within the limits of propriety if I suggested to Father Sebastian that he should invite Smith and myself to dinner in the College Hall on the same evening. Father Sebastian most kindly fell in with the project. My next step was to sound Smith.

Him I found not so easy to deal with. At first he said "yes; it was a capital idea; there was a strong Catholic vote in Paradise; one of the Fathers had been on his platform at the election and made a tip-top speech; yes, it would be a good thing to do; but he would like to talk it over with his wife before making up his mind." So he left the room. Coming back after ten minutes he said:

"No. That won't do. My wife is in close touch with the nonconformist women voters and they don't like that Jesuit College. No. More harm than good. They'd be talking about it next day all over Paradise. I should be compromised with my constituents. Very kind of you to think of it—but it won't do."

I was a little annoyed at this, for it seemed to me at the time that Smith's reason for declining the proposal was a very weak one, though I have since

been told by political friends whom I have consulted on the point that it was an exceptionally strong one. However, I knew that when once Smith and his wife had made up their minds together further argument was useless. So the matter was left at that point.

Before venturing further on the path of my narrative—I say 'venturing' because the path I am about to travel is beset by lions, and, indeed I can hear them at this moment roaring ominously in the distance—I am going to offer a word of well-meant advice to my capitalist friends, perhaps the last they will ever get from me, for the lions ahead are very fierce. I know the reader dislikes these interruptions. So do I. But the matter is urgent and the sequel will prove it so.

The Right Honourable Harold Smith is a very able and resolute man; he is also a trifle bitter and at times quite dangerously so. Now, nothing that my capitalist friends can do will make him less able and less resolute than he is. But they may easily make him more bitter than he is. They may easily turn him from a man who is dangerously bitter sometimes into a man who is dangerously bitter always. Let them avoid doing that if they can, for it is not a wise thing to do. So much for my advice in general. I will now make it specific.

We have already learnt that Smith is desperately fond of a day's fishing. We learnt it from his conversation with Lady Wildwater at Mrs. Temperley-Shadwell's dinner-party. And we remember how Lady Wildwater offered him a day's fishing among the salmon on her Scottish estate, an offer which

showed a sound instinct in Lady Wildwater, but revealed at the same time that her conception of fishing was different from Smith's, who has never caught a salmon in his life and never wants to, his idea of what constitutes a fish having been formed on the banks of the sluggish rivers of England, and centring chiefly on such denominations as roach, dace, chub, perch, barbel, eels and pike. This is the kind of fishing of which Smith is desperately fond. And now for my advice.

Let all capitalists beware how they interfere with Smith, to the spoiling of his sport, when, as a relaxation from his public duties, he goes for a day's fishing. If they own fishing rights on any of our sluggish rivers, such as the Ouse, or the Trent, let them issue the most stringent instructions to their keepers not to reprimand or otherwise molest Mr. Smith if they catch him fishing in preserved waters. By judiciously putting the blind eye to the telescope in this particular they may postpone the social revolution, or at least soften its asperities when it comes. Do you ask for evidence? Here it is.

Consider the following sequence of events. It was on a Thursday evening (as I shall presently narrate) that I met Smith coming home from a day's fishing with an empty basket and in an atrociously bad temper; and it was on Friday that he delivered that fiery speech (the reader must remember it) in which he declared for war to the knife against capitalism and challenged the masters to do their worst, with the result that his Federation called out the men next day.

A mere coincidence, you say. But wait: here is

another of the same kind. When did that strike, which followed so promptly on Smith's outburst of fiery eloquence, come to an end? It came to an end on July 15, and if you look up the records of it in your files of the Labour Press, you will find that the leading articles began to drop into a milder tone and the men to show a more conciliatory spirit on July 4.

Now come with me to Mr. Smith's private residence at 24 Hooker Road, Rumbelow Park, Smokeover. We enter the front sitting- (or dining-) room, and what is the first object that catches the eye? The first object that catches the eye is a *fish* in a glass case—to wit, an enormous stuffed pike (*esox lucius*) weighing 27 lb. 4¾ oz.; and if we happen to overlook it—which is not likely—Mr. Smith will immediately rebuke us for our lack of observation, as men who have no eyes in their heads, and call our attention to it, with a few explanatory remarks. He will tell us, for example, how, when the monster was brought home and weighed Mrs. Smith at once proposed that they should give a dinner to the Party and have the fish served up in brown sauce and trimmings, the only difficulty being that she had no pan large enough to cook it in and no dish large enough to serve it on, which difficulty, however, she thought might be overcome by boiling the fish in the kitchen copper and serving it up on the spare leaf of the dining-room table, specially disguised for the purpose; and how Smith, though sorely tempted by these propositions, had said "No. That fish shall be kept as an heirloom"—a momentary concession to the hereditary principle for which

I hope his Party, if they happen to get wind of it, will not bear too hardly upon Smith.

We next read the inscription beneath the glass case—and now we are coming to the point. The inscription records that it was caught by Harold Smith, M.P., in private waters (note this last) on June 30. Now compare that with the date on which the Labour Press dropped into a milder tone and the strikers into a more conciliatory spirit. The fish was caught on June 30; the milder tone appeared on July 4, and the strike ended ten days afterwards. "A mere coincidence," say you again? I answer, you are mistaken! I know Mr. Harold Smith. And before all the reasoners, deductive and inductive, of all the universities, Aristotelian Societies, Jesuits' Colleges and other logical institutions of the world I declare that, if Mr. Harold Smith's line had broken as he was hauling in this great fish, or other untoward accident caused it to escape at the last moment, that disastrous strike would not have ended when and how it did. I say that fish died for the British nation, if ever fish did! The story of its death shall form the subject of the next chapter.

But I must resume my narrative.

Not many days after my failure to promote a friendly meeting between Smith and the Jesuits I arrived from London about eight o'clock in the evening at the No. 3 platform of our principal Smokeover station, and as my train drew up on the one side a local train drew up on the other. Out of a compartment nearly opposite mine stepped a sturdy figure with a bundle of rods in his hand and a fish-

ing-basket on his back. It was Smith. He gave me a surly nod and we passed out of the barrier together.

"Any sport, Smith?" I asked.

"Sport? No! Might have had plenty, but one of your class spoilt it."

Now whenever Smith uses this expression—"your class"—in addressing me, I know that trouble is in the wind and look out for squalls. In his milder moods he allows for a difference between the Rockefellers, the Rothschilds, the Fords and myself, describing the former as "that pirate gang," but treating me as a more or less unconscious abettor of their crimes, guilty indeed, but with a guilt which stinks less abominably in the nostrils of social justice. But when his darker moods come on, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubles him, he lumps us all together as "your class," and would, I verily believe, hang the lot of us without distinction. The words, in short, are a danger signal. It was therefore with some misgivings that I asked him for particulars of the wrong that "my class" had done him.

It happened that our routes from the station lay in the same direction and I was giving him a lift in my car. Perhaps not a wise thing to do, considering the mood he was then in. For he had an alternative expression for "your class" which he sometimes used with telling effect when the frequent repetition of "your class" was beginning to spoil his style. He would then call us "the car-class" with a particularly nasty tone in his voice.

"The state of the rivers for twenty miles round Smokeover," he replied, "is perfectly scandalous.

Polluted by your car-class to such a degree that no fish worth catching can live in the waters. I tell you it must be *stopped*, and *we* are going to stop it." (I devoutly hoped they would.) "Now look at me to-day! I had to take the train thirty miles out to find a drop of clean water. And then nothing doing! Not a bite! Might as well have fished in that tank!" (He pointed to a huge tank of bluish liquid that was steaming outside one of the chemical factories.) "The filth spreads all over the country. I fished for four hours, and never saw the smell of a fish." (Smith, I may here remark, though a first-rate public speaker, has an odd way of mixing his metaphors.) "Well, I'd just finished my lunch and was smoking a pipe and thinking I'd pack up and go home, when a boy comes along the bank and says, 'Any sport, mister?' I says, 'No, my lad,' He says, 'There's a place a mile and a half further down where me and another boy caught thirty-two last week. You pull 'em out as fast as you throw your line in.' 'Are you telling lies?' I says. 'No,' he says, 'gospel truth.' 'All right,' I says, 'you take me to that place and stay by me till I go home. If you're telling me the truth I'll give you half a crown, and if not I'll give you a licking.' So off we went and found the place, the boy hiding under the bank while I fished.

"Well, I had four out in ten minutes, beauties, and had just hooked another when I looked round, and there was the boy running for his life, and a big man coming down the field behind. 'Run!' shouts the boy, turning his head round. But I'm not the kind that runs, least of all from your class, nor from your wage-slaves neither. I saw what was coming.

It was the keeper. 'Are you aware that you're trespassing on Sir William Timbertree's estate?' says he. 'These are his private waters.' There were some pretty high words between us, I can tell you, and I won't say that I didn't use strong language. I told him what I thought of your class in general and of Sir William Timbertree in particular—I know how he made his money—and if that keeper doesn't understand his position as a wage-slave it isn't my fault. It was all I could do to keep my hands off the blockhead, and if it handn't been that I thought of the nonconformist vote in Paradise in the nick of time, I'd have landed him one on the point of the jaw, that I would! Well, to cut a long story short, he turned me off and actually made me give up the four fish I'd caught—the fifth had got off. The fish were still alive and he threw 'em back into the water, and it was then that I came so near hitting him. So that's all. And now you know how one of your class has spoilt my day's sport. *And I'm not going to forget it.*"

By this time we had arrived at 4 Hooker Road. As Smith got out of the car I said, "Smith, I'm going to exert myself to set this matter right. I know Sir William Timbertree."

"Oh, yes!" answered Smith in a contemptuous tone. "I've heard all about your shaking hands with Colonel Capenhurst. You seem to be setting up in the reconciliation line of business. You'll soon become quite a professional. But I tell you it will take a lot of your exertions to make me shake hands with Sir William Timbertree *after this!*"

And in that evil humour Smith passed through

his garden gate without so much as saying good night.

During the recital of Smith's story an idea had been slowly rising to the threshold of my consciousness, and this time, I cannot refrain from flattering myself, it was a really brilliant one.

The development of this brilliant idea of mine into a sequence of historical events will appear in due course. If the reader has patience to follow to the end he will learn how I was enabled, at last, to "solve the problem" of my article on "the Roman Church and the Labour Movement." On that topic suffice it to say that I was, so far, making no progress at all towards the completion of my task. The failure of my efforts to bring Smith into personal contact with the Jesuits had left me completely stranded, and I was beginning to wish that I had adopted the American editor's original proposal that I should write on the 'attitude' of the one to the other, on which I could have written half a dozen articles almost without pausing to think.

By putting this and that together the reader will now understand the *precipitating* cause of that disastrous strike which gave us the feeling, not so long ago, that we had arrived on the very brink of the social revolution. To save him the trouble of prolonged ratiocination, I will say that the precipitating cause of the strike unquestionably lay in the high-handed action of Sir William Timbertree's keeper in turning Smith off his fishing-pitch and throwing his fish into the water.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Day's Fishing

I HAVE no hesitation in claiming that my plans for promoting a better feeling between Smith and "our class" were laid with a notable degree of artfulness; indeed so artful were these plans of mine that the present disclosure of them would, almost certainly, revive the rumour that I am a Jesuit in disguise, were it not that the rumour had been definitely killed by my public reconciliation with Colonel Capenhurst, whose funeral I attended, with a heavy heart, only the other day.

Nor will the reader's admiration for my artfulness, which I confidently expect, be diminished when he discovers, as he soon will, that I so contrived my operations as to compass a second object along with the first, that, namely, of finding material for my article on "Rome and the Labour Movement." As to the first object—the more friendly feeling between Smith and "our class"—I believe I succeeded, at least up to a point; as to the second I confess I failed. Which last, now I come to think of it, may convince the reader that I am a bungler after all, and not a Jesuit, or anything else, in disguise.

Great circumspection was necessary. Like the rest of us Smith is endowed with a considerable gift of that mysterious element known as "human nature,"

which reduces so many of our social theories (otherwise profound) to rank foolishness and dislocates the plans of great statesmen (otherwise sagacious), to say nothing of amateur meddlers like myself. Had it been a question of getting Smith and Sir William Timbertree to shake hands as two irresponsible specimens of the genus *Homo* there would have been no great difficulty in my enterprise. But Smith, again like the rest of us, was the member of a Party, and a very touchy Party too. Had it got wind that I was out for promoting more friendly relations between his Party and "our class" I am confident that I should have failed and failed ignominiously. Smith would have interpreted my operations as a subtle manœuvre on behalf of the capitalist interest, a manœuvre which I have often heard him describe contemptuously as "the Brotherhood-of-Man dodge—*which we see through*"; while all my efforts to convince him to the contrary would only have confirmed his suspicions, just as they did in the parallel case when I was trying to prove that I was not a Jesuit in disguise. Circumspection therefore was necessary.

I knew that Smith, owing to the large Roman Catholic vote in the Paradise Division, was anxious to establish a friendly footing with the Fathers in the Jesuit College, if he could do so without compromising himself too deeply with the Nonconformists, for Smith, I may tell you, is a very skilful electioneer. And I knew also, as the reader now knows, that the weak spot in his human make-up was his love of a day's fishing. With these two forces I determined to work my ends. I would

make the two converge, if possible, upon the common objective.

Now the Art, or Sport, of Fishing is divided into three parts, like ancient Gaul. Or rather like human life itself, to which, from the time of Izaak Walton, it has been known to present many significant resemblances. The two main divisions are the Active and the Contemplative. The Active consists of whipping the surface of the water with a fly. The Contemplative consists in watching a more or less stationary 'float' beneath which, at a carefully calculated depth, is suspended a hooked worm, maggot or other tempting morsel of a fish's dietary. If I may say it without emphasizing class distinctions too offensively, the Active type of fishing is the more affected by "our class" (that is, mine) and the Contemplative by Smith's.

But between these two there is a third variety, partaking of the nature of both. This is pike-fishing, in which periods of prolonged contemplation are broken (if the fisherman is fortunate) with periods of the intensest activity. And it was to this third variety that Smith, though a 'bottom-fisher' by training, had given the devotion of his maturer years. He had begun his career as a fisherman on the dark waters of a certain canal somewhere between Darlington and Newcastle-on-Tyne (for he was not a native of Smokeover), his equipment in those days consisting of his mother's mop-stick, a piece of string, a bent pin, and a bottle to receive the catch. But when I knew him he had a fine collection of rods, and among them several of a massive and outstanding character, evidently designed for dealing with

weighty and obstreperous fish. These were his pike-rods. He kept them behind the coat rack in the hall of No. 24 Hooker Road, and I have often observed them when passing in or out of the house.

My plan flashed upon me one day when I was visiting Father Sebastian at the Jesuits' College. On passing the room of one of the Fathers I had noticed, through the open door, a fishing-rod standing in a corner. In that place and surroundings it struck me as an interesting object. "Here," I said to myself, "is a point of contact between one of these Fathers and Smith, and therefore between the Roman Church and the Labour Movement. I must follow this up. Perhaps I shall be able to write that article after all."

Later on I said to Father Sebastian:

"I see you have a fisherman in the College. I noticed a fishing rod in one of the rooms as I came up the stairs."

"Yes. Father Balmaine. The poor man is desperately fond of fishing. But he can get none. He tells me the rivers are polluted for miles round."

"Well," I said, "it so happens that I am shortly going for a day's fishing myself with two or three friends, and among them our Labour member. Do you think Father Balmaine would join us?"

"It would be a great kindness to take him with you. He is ruining his health on his new edition of the *Summa*. And it would do him good to meet Smith and to have a day in the fresh air. And—if I am not asking too much—I should like to go myself, as a mere spectator, of course, partly because I

am anxious to know Smith and partly because Balmaine will be happier if I am there."

Nothing could have fallen in more aptly with my plans. That night I wrote to Sir William Timbertree. I knew that on his vast estate at Mallingford Abbey there was a lake or great fishpond which had retained historical continuity since the monks drew their Friday fare from it five hundred years ago; and I knew that a day's fishing in that lake was regarded by all pike-fishermen in the United Kingdom as the nearest approach to the joys of heaven that this troubled earth affords. I was in the fortunate position of having once rendered a small service to Sir William (it was in connection with the affairs of a certain Mr. Hooker, one of the Heroes of Smokeover) and I hoped for good results. They came. Sir William cordially granted my request and enclosed his card with permission for myself and party to fish in his lake.

The next step was to deal with Smith, and this was a ticklish affair. He raised no objection to the company of the Jesuit Fathers—rather welcomed it, in fact. But taking favours from Sir William Timbertree was another matter. However, when I explained to him that Sir William's lake swarmed with pike of astonishing dimensions, that no fisherman had ever been known to come away from it empty, that it was, in fact, *the* lake, Mallingford Lake, the rumour of which had gone forth throughout the wide world, then it was that his resistance completely collapsed, his countenance became transfigured and with a round oath which I shall not transcribe he cried out, "I'll go!" One condition

only was laid down by Smith. It was that Mrs. Smith should go with us. To this, as always, I readily assented.

So the party consisted of five, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, the two Jesuit Fathers and myself—the last a spectator also. My car just managed to take us all, though it was a tight fit. Smith, with a Jesuit Father on either side, sat behind; Mrs. Smith and I in front.

The conversation at the back of the car began with certain proposition, launched by Father Sebastian, about industrial conditions in Smokeover, and I pricked up my ears in the hope of getting hints for my article. Smith replied in a tone of irritation. It was obvious that the "social problem," so far as he was concerned, had ceased to exist for that day. But with Father Balmaine he was talking volubly—about fishing. What I heard from the rear of the car was a mixture, of which the following is a specimen:

"But how would you deal with foreign competition?"

"Oh, refer it to the League of Nations—I was just on the point of landing him, a four pounder at least, when my other rod, which I had left on the bank——" "I doubt if the League of Nations——" "but I never did believe in those three-pronged hooks——" "attitude of the Labour Party towards ——" "dealt with it when I introduced the Bill. No, not a worm, but a maggot. But unfortunately the other man had got my favourite pitch." "In Ireland, if a man takes your pitch, we always give him a taste of——" I forgot to say that Father Balmaine was an Irishman.

With Mrs. Smith, whom I regard as the second best woman in the world, I got on famously—indeed I always do. She was overjoyed to have a day in the country, and delighted in the song of the larks and the smell of the hay, and the thatched cottages, and the pretty gardens, and the old church steeples. Again and again she hoped "it wouldn't rain because Harold had forgotten his umbrella," and was immensely relieved when I said I was sure it wouldn't. Her sewing-bag was on her arm, and under the seat was the lunch-basket which she had furnished. She told me that she had remembered all my weaknesses in the preparation of the lunch, and had a thermos flask, no, two thermos flasks, filled with coffee made on her own principles, which she knew I approved of. I thanked her for that, and said that when her Party came into power and had nationalized everything and exterminated my class ("Oh, we'll never exterminate *you*," said that excellent woman) they would make it their next business to reform the coffee of England, by decreeing penal servitude for all hotel proprietors, restaurant keepers, and railway service caterers who offer poor travellers the filthy drench now served in public places under the name of 'coffee.' She said penal servitude would be no more than they deserved and she would certainly speak about it to Harold, who had once been made very ill by drinking a cup of the nasty stuff in Smokeover refreshment-room just before an important speech. I then asked her if she could spell coffee, and when she spelt it in the usual way I told her she was wrong and that the proper way to spell it was kaughphy.

Which greatly amused her, and made her turn round to the back of the car and impart the new spelling to Harold and the two Fathers.

The scene of operation, situated in the midst of one of the loveliest parks in England, was reached betimes and the two fishermen, Smith and Father Balmaine, were soon at work, their plan being to fish from the bank in the first instance, and resort to the punt later if the bank proved unproductive. Father Sebastian and I sat down together under a tree in the rear of the fishermen. Mrs. Smith, who was keenly interested in the sport, sat near her husband on the bank, and took out her sewing.

Sir William Timbertree's lake was not long in responding to its reputation. Fish after fish was taken out by Smith, none of them, however, very large. Father Balmaine was less fortunate. He succeeded in hooking several fish but he lost them every time. It was obvious that his rod and line were inadequate. Moreover, he had no landing-net. I remarked on the fact to Father Sebastian.

"Yes, poor fellow," said Sebastian. "You see he has very little money, and the little he has is all spent on buying rare editions of the *Summa*. If I had thought of it, I would have bought him a new rod."

Shortly afterwards Smith, seeing that Father Balmaine was in difficulties, laid his rod down on the bank and walked along to where the Father was fishing to inquire into the cause of the trouble. I did not hear what passed between them but I saw a rather pretty thing. I saw Smith go back to his place, fetch his fine rod, carry it to the Father and

take in exchange the miserable contraption with which the latter had been fishing. A point, thought I, for my article on the Roman Church and the Labour Movement.

I now strolled to Smith's side to watch him fishing. He was a more skilful fisherman than the Father and managed, in spite of the poor equipment he now had, to catch two fish with it. As though I had not noticed what had taken place between him and Balmaine I said:

"Why aren't you fishing with your own rod, Smith?"

"Lent it to the Father," he answered in a growling voice. "You see the poor devil hasn't many pleasures in life." And I made a mental note of another point for my article.

At that moment there was a tremendous tug on Smith's line, and instantly the top piece of the Father's rod went smash. A moment later the line snapped and the fish was off.

"Damn!" said Smith.

Father Balmaine, seeing what had happened, came along with Smith's rod in his hand. For some minutes there was a friendly altercation between the two men which ended in Smith resuming his own rod. He began preparing his tackle for another cast and Father Balmaine, having no other rod to fish with, sat down under the tree with Father Sebastian. Mrs. Smith, who had been an interested spectator of these things, joined her husband and me and asked for explanations, which Smith gave, ending as before with the remark that the 'poor devil had few pleasures in life.'

"Yes," said Mrs. Smith. "And then think of his *clothes*. Did you notice his poor old black coat?"

"I could see to shave myself in the back of it," said Smith, adjusting a new bait on his hook.

"I wonder what his clothes are like *underneath*," said Mrs. Smith. "And I wonder if he has anybody to mend them."

Mrs. Smith had not long to wait before her womanly curiosity was satisfied in both particulars.

It was a hot day and we were all thirsty, Smith especially, as a consequence of his "piscatory exertions"—as the *Fisherman's Chronicle* described them next week. From time to time he would mention various large sacrifices he was ready to make for a draught of cold water, once going so far as to say that he would "lose a hundred votes" to any man who would bring him a bucketful "like we used to draw out of my old mother's well." This caused us to bestir ourselves, and looking round we discovered on the hillside behind us a structure which was obviously a well-house. It was in fact the ancient well where the monks of Mallingford had drawn water in the far-off days of Catholic England, most carefully preserved by Sir William Timbertree, who had restored the well-house from a design furnished by a famous ecclesiastical architect. Father Balmaine at once volunteered to reconnoitre; "but before I go," he said, "I think I'll take off my coat and waistcoat." This he did; and Mrs. Smith, who was looking on at a little distance, uttered an exclamation of horror. The Father's shirt was in rags.

Nor was that all.

For the information of those benighted regions

where the inhabitants go about in kilts or other aboriginal garments (such, for instance, as the skin) I may be permitted to say that on every pair of civilized human trousers (except those designed for our sports and pastimes) two buttons are affixed at the back, to which pair of buttons the braces, used in the suspension of the trousers, are attached. Father Balmaine's trousers had once been duly furnished with the said pair of buttons; but one of them had disappeared, and his braces hung precariously on the other, the buttonless tab sticking out at an acute angle from its more fortunate companion, as though appealing to the sympathetic onlooker to be furnished with a button. Needless to say, this phenomenon did not escape the penetrating and experienced eye of Mrs. Smith.

In these conditions the good Father started off towards the well where the monks of old had so often foregathered. As I watched him climb the hill I began to meditate on the mutabilities and the vicissitudes; and I believe Father Sebastian was sharing my thoughts. But Smith and his wife were thinking of other, and perhaps higher, things.

"Mother," said Smith—this was his usual way of addressing the wise and admirable one—"Mother, couldn't you manage to sew that button on for him?"

"I mean to try," said the wise and admirable. "Unless he has it sewn on the other will come off before he gets home."

"You remember," said Smith, turning round from his fishing to give me a sly look, "how you insulted me about my braces when we were in Norway."

"Smith," I replied, "there's dignity about the

Father's braces that all the braces in Buckingham Palace cannot emulate, let alone yours or mine. And there's a glory about his ragged shirt that dazzles me."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Smith, "and well put, too."

Presently we saw the Father coming down the hill with a large shining bucket, which was evidently heavy, for he kept changing it from hand to hand. Mrs. Smith, meanwhile, was industriously searching for something in her sewing-bag. Having found it she looked up and fixed that thoughtful eye of hers on the swaying figure of the Father.

"If he goes on jerking like that," she said, "the other button will be off before he gets down the hill"—a remark, I thought, which showed great intelligence.

All this time Father Sebastian sat silent and motionless under the great oak tree. Perhaps he was praying; perhaps he was seeing visions of the past. Once I thought I heard him say faintly "ah yes, ah yes."

And now the bucket, with very little of the water spilled, was at our feet. Smith waited for no cup or glass, but plunging his face in the cold liquid drank and drank like a horse, the Father meanwhile steadying the bucket between his knees. "A third point for my American article," thought I.

Now Mrs. Smith was standing behind the Father, her keen eye fixed on the middle of his back. In one hand she held a needle and thread and in the other a button. The 'attitude' of the Roman Church was convenient, the Labour Movement with tools all

ready was three yards off; and the temptation to a *rapprochement* was irresistible. Smith's head was still in the bucket when Mrs. Smith said quietly from behind, "Sit still, Father, or I shall run my needle into your back." And Father Sebastian from beneath his oak also said, "Sit still, Balmaine."

The operation, which included the strengthening of the remaining button, now on its last legs, was soon completed. Meanwhile a foolish thought had come into my head. "I will have my American article illustrated," I said to myself. "I will get some artist to draw that scene from my description, and I will have it reproduced at the head of the article with the words underneath, "The relation of Rome to Labour." That foolish thought was passing through my mind when the Labour Leader, after another drink, withdrew his head from the bucket and said:

"The water from my old mother's well never tasted better."

After this there was a lengthy conversation between Father Balmaine and Mrs. Smith, followed by a consultation with Father Sebastian under his oak. I did not catch the tenor of it at the time, but Mrs. Smith told me soon afterwards. "He has agreed," she said, "to let me mend his clothes, and I am to have a bundle of them every fortnight. His shirt is coming to-morrow. Father Sebastian has given permission and says he shall probably send some of his."

And all this passed in Sir William Timbertree's Park, amid the sunshine of a summer day, the flecking shadows cast by the foliage of the great trees,

the ripple of waters on the margin of the lake and the occasional splash of a struggling fish.

It was now two o'clock and our luncheon, which we had taken under Father Sebastian's oak, with him as a kind of presiding genius, was just over, when we were startled by the sudden apparition of the keeper, who seemed to have dropped out of the clouds. He had evidently prepared a speech which he was anxious to get done with, and without a moment's delay began as follows, after significantly touching his hat to Smith:

"Good day, gentlemen, and Sir William's compliments and 'opes you'll give him the honour of your company at the Abbey when you have finished your sport and apologies as from me though acting under orders to the Right Honourable Mr. Smith as wouldn't 'ave 'appened on no account if we'd known who he was but poachers very troublesome lately as wouldn't leave a fish in the waters for gentlemen like yourselves and 'ouse and grounds entirely at your disposal gentlemen and the lady's and Sir William 'opes you'll try the other side of the lake before you leave. And now gentlemen is there anything I can do for you?"

"Yes, there is," said Smith, who was not quite mollified. "This gentleman here," pointing to Father Balmaine, "has broken his rod and line. Can you get him another?"

"Certainly, sir, Rod and tackle too, sir. And if you'll excuse me, sir, I would advise the other side of the lake."

Never before had I been so vividly conscious of

that "sympathy with the under dog" which many believe to be the underlying motive of the Labour Movement. That, too, was noted as a point for my American article. I perceived also that Father Balmaine with his shabby coat, ragged shirt and generally forlorn and buttonless condition was becoming the centre of interest to the whole party, while the fishing and all connected with it was falling to the rank of a secondary affair. Now that was not what I wanted, and it was therefore a real relief to me when the keeper cut the knot. The effect on Smith was instantaneous. He was so delighted when the Father got his new rod that I believe he would have shaken hands on the spot with Rockefeller himself. And with that we all returned to our centre of gravity—the fishing.

"Don't forget, gentlemen," said the keeper, after furnishing Father Balmaine with a rod and tackle such as he had never handled in his life, "don't forget to try the other side of the lake. The biggest fish lie there."

We found our way to the other side of the lake and no sooner were we established there than the keeper's words began to come true. The first catch was made by Father Balmaine and a large fish landed amid tremendous 'hoorays' from Smith. I shall not describe the successive captures (a full account of them may be found in the *Fisherman's Chronicle* for the following week) but come at once to the prodigious and culminating triumph of the day.

It was six o'clock, and Father Sebastian, who had found another tree to pray under—for that was

clearly how he passed the time—had fallen asleep with his hands folded, when a shout from Smith startled us all. His rod was bent double and he was running along the bank to ease the pressure on his line. Father Balmain, with a quick sympathy of a fisherman, drew his own tackle out of the water and ran to the spot.

"I'm in for a big fight," gasped Smith, "but I doubt if the line will hold."

"Sure the line will hold," cried the excited Father, "if the great God permits it, but not else! Be aisy, Mr. Smith, and gentle too, sir; glory be to God ye're holding him fine! It's St. Peter's own way of playing a fish that you're giving him, sir; bedad, I wish the whole Labour Cabinet was here to see you doing it! And if your arm grows weary, it's meself that'll hold the rod while you're resting. But for the mercy of heaven, sir, lower the point of your rod or you'll be losing him when he rushes! Ah, Father Sebastian, dear," he called to his colleague under the tree, "pray with all your soul that the line doesn't break, for it's a thirty-pound fish the gentleman has hooked!"

In the excitement of the moment the learned editor of the *Summa Theologia* had fallen back into the vernacular of his peasant ancestors, and very pleasant it was to hear the soft accents in the calm summer air.

For an hour and seventeen minutes the struggle lasted, Mrs. Smith, trained to the office by her husband, being timekeeper, and twenty-two rounds (as Smith called the successive rushes of the fish) had been gallantly fought on both sides when Father

Balmaine announced that the end was at hand. "There's no more fight in the fish now," he cried, "than there was in the Protestant minister after Father Flannigan had handled him in the Kilrooney Debate." The monster was in fact lying motionless in a pool beyond a thick growth of water plants, but far too heavy to be hauled ashore.

"It's meself that must bring him in," said Father Balmaine, "or we'll be losing him in the weeds. It's meself that must bring him in, but the lady must please retire."

This the lady discreetly did, after remarking to me in a voice of alarm, "The poor man will catch his death of cold. He has no overcoat. Get the rug out of the car and wrap it round him the minute he gets his clothes on."

Then the Father, having divested himself of his clothes (with what further revelations history shall not record), waded out up to his armpits, netted the fish, and with no little difficulty brought him ashore.

Father Sebastian, who all this time had remained under the tree in prayer (whether for a happy issue to Smith's fishing or for something more important, no man will ever know for certain), now joined us, and gazed intently for some moments on the expiring monster.

Now a monster pike, considered as a visual object, does not suggest the general beneficence of the universe. Whatever may be said about the flowers of the field and the birds of the air seems to fall flat as we study the wicked eyes and the cruel teeth of that species of fish. These thoughts were evidently

passing through the mind of Father Sebastian, for he presently said:

"I doubt if the blessed God created him."

"He's an incarnation of wickedness," I added.

"He looks very old and very wicked," said Father Sebastian.

As to Father Balmaine, he was beside himself with excitement and exulted thus, standing over the fallen foe and triumphing gloriously:

"Sure, it's a child of the devil that we've caught, entirely! You may know it by the dangerous bad look in the face of him and by the sounds of destruction that come out of his mouth. Ha, ye ugly son of Satan, is it snapping the wicked old jaws of you that ye are, and, bedad, ye nearly got a piece of me bare leg that time! But now there's an end to your carryings on among dacenter fish than yourself, ye bloodthirsty, murdering pirate! Ha, but ye didn't know that ye were fighting a friend of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, and good luck to him! And the power of the Holy Church to strengthen his arm for the fishing! For it's never killed ye would have been at all, at all, if Father Sebastian hadn't kept up the praying under the tree—ye ould villain! Let the glory be given to God!"

Whereupon Father Balmaine, still *in naturalibus*, fell on his knees. And Father Sebastian (whether carried away by the torrent of his colleague's enthusiasm, or for some other reason, I know not) did likewise. Smith was also on his knees, cautiously waiting to take the hook out of the fish. And the pike was snapping his mighty jaws in the agony of death. I thought it a strange scene.

There was silence until the Fathers had finished their exercise, Smith retaining his position when he saw what they were doing.

Suddenly a hearty voice sounded from behind:

"My congratulations, gentlemen! You've caught the patriarch of the Lake—I've tried for him myself a score of times. You'll have him stuffed of course. And now, gentlemen, I 'ope you'll step up to the Abbey and 'ave a bite, as soon as our friend here has put his clothes on."

We saw before us the jolly red face and massive figure of Sir William Timbertree, reputed the vulgarest man and the greatest surgeon in England, the son of a bricklayer, but now owner of Mallingford Abbey and the broad lands appertaining thereto, once the property of holy monks.

We excused ourselves. The hour was late, we said, we were all tired, and Smith was exhausted. "But I wish you to know, Sir William," added Smith, "that the meeting passes you a vote of thanks for this day's fishing. Not a hand held up against it."

"I'm sorry you won't 'ave a bite," said Sir William. "But where's the lady? Oh, of course I see" —with a glance at Father Balmaine who was putting on his clothes. "But now what do you say to me putting you all up for the night? Pyjamas for the lot of you and the lady's maid to look after the lady. Now think it over, gentlemen."

We thought it over, but again declined, with thanks duly given, and the suggestion of "another time."

"Give me a day's warning and the Abbey's yours," said the hospitable Sir William. "But no time like

the present for me—I make it a rule in all my operations. Now here you are and what I say is—stay where you are. And the clergymen included, of course. I don't know what denomination they belong to" (the Fathers' attire was not very distinctive that day), "but that makes no difference in my Abbey. I've operated on all denominations in my time and I find 'em all much the same when they come under the knife—Oh, they're Roman Catholics, are they? Well, so much the better. They shall sleep in the monks' dormitory, which I've had restored, and the butler shall bring 'em a cup o' tea in the morning before they get up, which I'll bet the old monks never got."

I thought this bad taste and I saw a cloud on Father Sebastian's face. Sir William saw it too, and immediately tried to correct his mistake, but with no great success.

"No offence to your feelings as Catholics, I 'ope, gentlemen," he went on. "We're always trying to bring back the old times at the Abbey. Going to have a pageant next month, with a procession of monks, and me as Abbot, and Thomas à Becket, and the Pope's Legate, and Cardinal Wolsey, and no end of interesting old jokers, all marching up to the Abbey gates, with banners flying and incense burning and ropes tied round their stomachs. All denominations welcome at the Abbey, gentlemen! Pick your own bedrooms; it's Liberty 'All for everybody."

Father Sebastian here explained rather frigidly that his duties at the College made his return that night imperative.

"Well, I'm disappointed," said Sir William. "But what about the other gentlemen? And the lady? I'd like to have a bit of argument with our Paradise friend yonder. Him and me belongs to the same class. My dad was a bricklayer and my mother a washerwoman. The luck of life has parted us, and it's a pity, that's all. I'd like to ask him a question or two—about my box of instruments. I don't want 'em nationalized. And I don't want the man as uses 'em nationalized—that's *me*. Now, Mr. Paradise, what do you say to spending the night at the Abbey and having a bit of an argument over a good cigar?"

The proposition was tempting, especially to Smith, whose love of argument ran hard with his love of a day's fishing for the place of the dominant principle, and we should probably have accepted it, had not Mrs. Smith, now returned to the scene of operations, put down her foot:

"No Harold," she said. "You must come home. Two strike Committees to-morrow morning and an open-air meeting at night. Remember that. I'm not going to have you lose your night's rest."

So it was decided to have "the bit of argument" another time. Not without regret on my part, for I would have liked greatly to hear Smith's answer (which no doubt would have been forthcoming) to Sir William's point about his box of instruments and "the man as uses 'em." Then we all shook hands with our exuberant entertainer, Smith not less cordially than the rest of us.

We drove home in the same order as before, all too tired for conversation, the great fish (wrapped

in the spare car-rug) extended on three pair of knees, two Catholic and one Labour, in the rear of the car. And very odd the creature looked, as Smith hoisted it into the car, swathed in the blanket, and with its hideous snout sticking out from the top of the bundle, prompting the remark from Father Balmaine: "It's after nursing the devil's own baby we are, but glory be to God, he's dead." The car seemed fuller of fish than of humanity and I was strongly reminded, especially in the olfactory department (for the nose is a powerful retainer of memories), of a night in my youth when I came back from sea in a trawler that had just made a record catch.

When we parted from Smith on his doorstep he said to me:

"This has been one of the two greatest days in my life. The other was when I won Paradise by a majority of twenty-seven on a poll of nineteen thousand. It was a near thing both times."

I then thanked Mrs. Smith for the excellent coffee, and she thanked me for the best outing she had had since she and Harold went courting at Blackpool. Father Sebastian was still praying and Father Balmaine was fast asleep, when we said good night.

The reader may now judge for himself whether or no I am right in affirming a link of connection between the events of that day and the more conciliatory tone of the Labour Press, and the unexpected ending, which occurred a few days afterwards, of the great strike. Anyhow, the monster fish may still be seen by anyone who cares to investi-

gate the matter in its glass case over the mantelpiece at 24 Hooker Road, to attest the truth of my story.

But what about my article on "The Attitude of the Roman Church to the Labour Movement"—for I had now resolved to restore the original title as proposed by the American editors?

My day's fishing was followed by an equally strenuous but far less productive day of writing. I set to work reconstructing the whole article in the light of the novel and picturesque experiences I had just had. Alas, I could make no satisfactory progress. The points I had mentally noted the day before were all vividly remembered, but when I tried to express their meaning in philosophical language I became lost in a maze of abstractions. At last I came to realize that if my three 'points' failed to tell their own story I could never tell it for them either to American readers or to anybody else. So I gave it up in despair.

Then came the last, and the least happy, of the 'bright ideas' that had been visiting me in the course of these transactions. "Why not tell the story of these events just as they occurred," I reflected, "and let *that*, the story of our day's fishing, stand as my 'solution of the problem' proposed by the American editors?"

No sooner said than done. I rushed to my writing table and then and there, *currente calamo*, wrote out the narrative, which the reader has just finished, up to the point when I bid good night to the Smiths on the doorstep of No. 24. Next day the finished

article was sent, by registered mail, to the office of the American magazine.

It was rejected, and a curt note accompanied the rejection informing me that my article was not an adequate treatment of "The Attitude of the Roman Church to the Labour Movement."

It was in this manner that I was made to swallow a dose of my own editorial medicine.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Hero-worship in Smokeover

THE year 1842 is memorable in the annals of Smokeover as the date that marks the foundation of the Smokeover Literary and Philosophical Society. The Society was founded by three of the then extant Heroes of that valiant and hero-breeding city. Their names were Henry Openshaw, merchant and philanthropist, Timothy Goodgame, M.D. (Edin.), physician and reformer, and the Reverend Septimus Mulholland, M.A. (Lond.), Unitarian minister.

These three Heroes (we call them 'worthies' in Smokeover) were long since gathered to their fathers, but the memory of their deeds is still fragrant among all classes of our citizens from the humblest to the most exalted. Nor has their personal appearance, their bodily form and pressure, entirely vanished from the eye of sense. It is preserved in life-size portraits hung on the staircase of our Municipal Art Gallery, which our three Heroes took their part in founding and enriching; and in statues, that of Openshaw in marble, now much blackened, that of Goodgame and of Mulholland in a cheaper kind of stone, but so black that the difference from the marble is not discernible; these being erected in appropriate public places, though somewhat defaced

by the droppings of pigeons, which nest by the hundred above the Doric pediment of our City Hall. From which statues we may learn that all three were notably solid gentlemen, especially in the region of the digestive apparatus, a little careless as to the fit of their frock-coats and with a strong predilection for stout and very comfortable shoes. And a most pleasant sight it is, as you go to business on a fine summer morning, to see the pigeons, with the sheen on their wings, floating in the air round those solid forms, now gently alighting on their heads, now curtsying on the ground below as they pick up the grain, as though they, too, would do reverence to the Mighty Dead.

No one born and bred in Smokeover would ever dare to say a word in disparagement of these three Heroes, either singly or collectively. But immigrants from other areas, imperfectly acquainted with local history—such as Professors from Oxford and Cambridge attracted to Smokeover University by the higher scale of salaries, or Bishops translated from other sees—have sometimes been known to show a certain disrespectfulness to the memory of one or other of the famous Three; and, I must add, to do this by implication is almost as fatal in Smokeover as to do it explicitly. It is asking for trouble if you do it in either way; it is risking your reputation and your usefulness to the City; and since the matter is of some importance I will cite examples of what might conceivably happen.

Let us suppose, for instance, that the Professor of Ethics in Smokeover University, imported from Oxford and naturally a disciple of T. H. Green, is

giving one of those admirable public lectures of his on the "Basis of Citizenship"—admission free and discussion invited at the close—and that he finds it necessary, to the fortifying of his argument, to have a tilt at the Utilitarians of 1840. What will happen? No sooner has the Chairman announced that the discussion is open than an infuriated son of Smokeover will start to his feet, and ask the lecturer to be good enough to explain what was wrong with Henry Openshaw. Was he not a Utilitarian? Was he not the friend of John Stuart Mill and of Cobden, and the promoter of innumerable beneficences? Loud applause from the audience. And this very hall in which we are assembled to-night, ladies and gentlemen, who built it in memory of his son who had fallen at the defense of Lucknow? Henry Openshaw. Louder applause. Nay more. Who founded the College, which afterwards developed into the University, which now pays the Professor of Ethics his salary? Henry Openshaw. And pays him *for what?* Why, pays him to stand up before a Smokeover audience and insult the memory of the noblest man who ever walked the streets of this City! Deafening applause, mingled with boo's and followed, when the Chairman has restored order, by a lame apology from the Professor of Ethics, who assures the gentleman that he has misunderstood his meaning, while the gentleman calls out "Bosh!" from his place in the hall, and swells with indignation until his shirt can hardly hold him. Whereupon the Professor silently resolves (though it is now too late) never again to attack the Utilitarians when addressing a Smokeover audience.

Or suppose the Smokeover atheists are holding their Annual Conference and, applying to the Lord Mayor for his official permission to have the use of the City Hall for that sociable purpose, receive from the said Lord Mayor, who is a leading member of the Baptist Denomination, a curt refusal. Then let the Baptist Denomination look out for squalls! Let it be prepared to answer these questions, voiced in the public press next day: what man has the Baptist Denomination, or any other Denomination, ever produced whose public services to our city will bear a moment's comparison with those of Timothy Goodgame, M.D., avowed atheist and author of *Atheism the Wise Man's Creed*, whose name will be uttered with reverence by hundreds of thousands when not a soul remembers that such people as the Lord Mayor ever existed? Who founded the General Hospital? Timothy Goodgame. Who taught Smokeover how to deal with its sewage? Timothy Goodgame. Who found out where the typhoid fever came from and raised the storm which brought pure water into the city? Timothy Goodgame. Who gave our children their first public playground? Timothy Goodgame. Who started the Lit. and Phil.? Timothy Goodgame. Let the Baptist denomination put all that, and much more, in its pipe and smoke it, and let the Lord Mayor take a puff or two at his leisure. Which the Lord Mayor, poor man, does, and doubts if he will be in office next year when the King comes down to open the new wing of the University.

We will now indulge a supposition more venturesome. Let us suppose that "the Brotherly Association of Smokeover Churches," in council assembled,

determine that a Grand United Rally of the Temperance Societies of all Denominations shall forthwith be held as a means to the promotion of Christian Unity, and that the Bishop be invited to address the massed reformers in the nave of the Cathedral. Which invitation the Bishop on receiving, makes this inquiry—is the *Unitarian* Denomination included in the Rally of all Denominations? It is, answers the Brotherly Association. Much regret on the part of the Bishop that he cannot accept, the Unitarian Denomination being, in his opinion, a trespassing and unpermitted Denomination, having no authentic place or right of lodging in a universe governed by the Thirty-Nine Articles—a Denomination, therefore, to which the right hand of episcopal brotherliness can in no wise be extended. Prolonged debatings in the Brotherly Association, and much balancing of pro's and con's, not without unbrotherly heat at moments, and with this as the final decision —that, as between the Bishop and the aforesaid erring Denomination, or synagogue of Satan, we prefer the Bishop, though only by the Chairman's casting vote. So, the offence being removed, the Bishop accepts. But see the correspondence columns of the local press next day and for weeks afterwards! Day by day the Bishop is being challenged to state publicly whether or no he regards the Reverend Septimus Mulholland, who died of cholera contracted in the slums in 1849, as a trespasser in the universe and a member of the synagogue of Satan. The Bishop also observes that the list of subscribers to the Cathedral Restoration Fund, on the outside of the local paper, contains the names of no more rich

Unitarians—a serious loss, which considerably impairs the prospect of getting the Cathedral restored within measurable time. And that is not the worst. A wily Unitarian has the worst up his sleeve, and is biding his time. "Does his Lordship remember," he writes in a final Open Letter to the Bishop, "the *hymn* sung at the Grand Rally, the hymn in which his Lordship was observed to be joining so lustily, to the accompaniment of the Cathedral organ? And is his Lordship aware, is the Brotherly Association aware, *that that hymn was composed by the Reverend Septimus Mulholland?* What about the synagogue of Satan, now, my Lord? You are in a considerable fix. And for the future, my Lord, be on your guard against singing in public, or appointing to be sung in the Churches of your diocese of Smokeover, any hymn, whether in 'Ancient and Modern' or other authorized collection, the author of which in indicated by the word 'Anon' at the end thereof. For the probability is high that the said 'Anon' will turn out, on due historical inquiry, to be no other than the Rev. Septimus Mulholland, described by you (by implication) as a trespasser in the universe, but venerated by all who know the history of this City (which you, my Lord, apparently do not know) as one of the Makers of Smokeover, scholar, philosopher, poet, prophet, hero, saint and martyr, the builder of schools, the founder of the Home Missions to the Poor—for whom he laid down his life when the cholera was raging in '49. And if, my Lord, you doubt the main assertion here made, we invite you to visit our humble residence, where we shall be happy to show you, in the glass case

in which we reverently preserve them, the original MSS. of the aforesaid hymn, or hymns, all written out in the beautiful caligraphy of the Reverend Septimus Mulholland."

These suppositions are put forward by way of warning to the unwary. The warning is, to let no word fall in Smokeover, to let no gesture be seen in that City, which might be taken to imply the faintest disrespect for Henry Openshaw, merchant and utilitarian, Timothy Goodgame, physician and atheist, Septimus Mullholland, Unitarian minister, hymnodist and martyr. I do not mean that the population of Smokeover is composed exclusively of utilitarians, atheists and Unitarians. Far from it. But Smokeover honours its Heroes, and it has no hero worthier of honour than these three, co-founders of the Lit. and Phil.—whatever the Professor of Ethics, the Lord Mayor or the Bishop may think to the contrary.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Smokeover Problem Club

FOR half a century the Smokeover Literary and Philosophical Society remained the centre of the intellectual life of the City. All the great men of Smokeover, whether lay or clerical, were members, and the leading thinkers of mid-Victorian times considered themselves honoured by an invitation to address it, to say nothing of the spanking fee that rewarded the lecture.

But its glory has departed. It still meets where it has always met, in the Masonic Hall at the corner of Openshaw and Goodgame Streets, and life-size portraits of the three heroes, duplicates of those in the Art Gallery, still hang on the dimly lighted wall behind the chair from which the Rev. Septimus Mulholland delivered the Opening Address in 1842. But the company has dwindled to a dozen old gentlemen who entertain, or bore, one another with such subjects as these—"How I met Tyndall in 1870," "Smokeover in the Sixties," "Men I have known," "Famous Speeches of Lord Beaconsfield," "An Estimate of the Character of Lord Palmerston," "The Baconian Cypher in *Coriolanus*," "Water Weeds in the Smokeover and Everstrike Canal," "Date of the Great Pyramid," "Rare Editions in My Library," "Edible Fungi as a Food for the Poor." By the

time the speaker has finished his address half the company are asleep, and he sometimes goes to sleep himself during the discussion that follows. And, needless to say, the spanking fees are no more, the subscription list having fallen to an ebb so low, that a capital levy of half a crown has usually to be imposed on each of the old gentlemen before the yearly budget can be balanced.

While the Literary and Philosophical Society has thus been falling into obsolescence another and greater institution has been coming to the front. This is the famous "Smokeover Problem Club." Let no one suppose that the decay of the old Society betokens a general decay in the intellectual life of Smokeover. The intellectual life of Smokeover is becoming a more portentous phenomenon every year; and it is precisely because of that astonishing growth in the intellectual department that a more adequate means has been sought for its expression. The Smokeover Problem Club is the meeting-point of intellectual forces far more varied and covers a far wider range of intellectual interests than the Literary and Philosophical ever attempted, or even dreamed of, in the days of its glory, when Tyndall and Huxley got their spanking fees. The Club, one may say, has eclipsed the Society.

It was about the year 1890, if I remember rightly, that 'problem' began to make its appearance as a candidate for the place of chief catchword in the language, a candidature since crowned with success by the combined suffrages of philosophers, theologians, preachers, statesmen, journalists, social reformers, advertisement specialists and doctors both

qualified and quack—by all, in fact, who wield a pen or wag a tongue. Up to 1890, or thereabouts, we talked of 'problems' in connection with some things; now we talk of them in connection with everything, and our literature, as well as our conversation, is dominated by the word.

There are not many noun substantives in our language to which 'problem' has not been prefixed by somebody; not many, at all events, but acquire a new dignity the moment we introduce the 'problem' of it, as though they had been elevated to a kind of intellectual peerage. Take the word 'mother,' for example. Most of us imagine that we know by the light of nature what that means. But how strangely the meaning seems to change (whether for better or worse, who shall say?) when on taking up one of our magazines the first title we encounter is "The Problem of the Mother." Or take the word 'timber.' This also is fairly intelligible to the plain man. But how much more portentous and mysterious an affair timber becomes when we learn that an important session of the British Association is being devoted to discussing "The Problem of Timber."

Both problems have been rigorously dealt with by the Smokeover Problem Club, though I cannot find that any unanimous solution was given to either. Looking through the minute-book (which came into my hands under circumstances I will presently mention) I observe that in 1921 Miss Euphemia Nicelanguage, M.D., Propaganda Agent of the World Association for Birth Control, gave an address to the Club on "The Problem of the Mother," in which

she demonstrated that if the human race continues to propagate itself in the present careless manner, three mental defectives will be standing, by a certain date, on every square yard of the earth's habitable surface; a deplorable prospect, only to be avoided by methods which, whatever may be said in their favour, would certainly have the effect of rendering "the Mother" even more problematic than she now is. Later on in the same session came a lecture by Mr. Willard Hardhead, M.I.C.E., on "The Problem of Timber." According to this authority it would appear that if the present rate of consumption is maintained, in three or four generations not a timber tree will be left growing on the earth, the whole surface becoming absolutely bald like an old man's head; a prospect all the more appalling if coupled with the Nicelanguage vaticination, according to which the space once occupied by the trees will become crowded with imbeciles; but avoidable by a judicious combination of the advice given by the two lecturers—to be sparing in the procreation of children, and lavish in the planting of trees.

At the present time everybody in Smokeover who values his brains is a member of the Problem Club. There is also a strong contingent of members from Everstrike, and if you happen to be travelling in or out of Smokeover on the night of a meeting you may have some difficulty in finding a seat either in the trams or the trains. The discussions that take place under the 'auspices' of the Club are of recognized public importance. There is a table crowded with reporters, many of them from London, in front of the platform, and the proceedings are often given

next day almost verbatim by the principal newspapers.

Needless to say, therefore, the greatest honour that has befallen me, the greatest but the most undeserved, was my election as President for the year of the Smokeover Problem Club, an election which carried the duty of delivering the Opening Address of the Session. As I looked forward to that Opening Address I felt that I was approaching a crisis in my life.

My first 'problem' was to choose a suitable subject, and in a moment of perversity I was tempted to tell the Secretary that I would speak on "The Problem of Finding a Problem to Talk About." But then I remembered the wise counsel which Smith had given to Lady Wildwater about "pulling the leg of your audience," and I saw at once that it would never do to pull the leg of the Smokeover Problem Club. So I had to try again. I even went the length of taking down my English dictionary and putting the word 'problem' before every noun-substantive that I came across, but though I found that almost every combination formed a capital subject (for example, "The Problem of Aaron's-beard"—one of the first nouns in the dictionary) it was generally a subject I knew nothing about. However, after working through the dictionary for several hours, I made out a list of objects in time and space, or of abstractions out of both, with the 'problems' of which I thought myself not wholly unacquainted.

But before making a final choice I bethought me of applying to the Secretary for the loan of the minute-book, to make sure that I was not repeating

a subject already dealt with by more competent hands. To my dismay I found that every subject on my list would be a repetition. Here is a selection from the 'problems' discussed by the Club as recorded in the minute-book—a selection including every 'problem' I had noted as within my own range and containing many others hopelessly beyond me.

The Problem of the Child. The Problem of Woman. The Problem of Man. The Problem of the Family. The Problem of the State. The Problem of the Church. The Problem of Parliament. The Problem of the House of Lords. The Problem of Democracy. The Problem of Civilization. The Problem of Milk. The Problem of the Supernatural. The Problem of the Food Supply. The Problem of Opium. The Problem of War. The Problem of Peace. The Problem of the Fourth Gospel. The Problem of Germany. The Problem of China. The Problem of the Panama Canal. The Problem of Dual Personality. The Problem of Evil. The Problem of Good. The Problem of Religion. The Problem of Christianity. The Problem of Dreyfus. The Problem of Marriage. The Problem of Divorce. The Problem of the Future. The Problem of Time. The Problem of Space. The Problem of the Slums. The Problem of the Universe. The Problem of Life. The Problem of Death. The Problem of God. The Problem of the Agricultural Labourer. The Problem of Shakespeare. The Problem of the Feeble-minded. The Problem of Relativity. The Problem of Domestic Service. The Problem of Beauty. The Problem of Town Sewage. The Problem of

'Endymion.' The Problem of the Self. The Problem of the Atom.—The Problem, in short, of Everything and Everybody under the sun. And a few more.

The despair into which I had been plunged by my failure to write that plaguey American article was great, but this was infinitely worse. The word 'problem' began to haunt me and I really believe that I came within measurable distance of going off my head. Horrible dreams would visit me in the night; sometimes the problems would swim round me like shoals of fishes and snap their jaws at me as Smith's pike had snapped his at Father Balmaine; sometimes they would assemble round me like the little jackals in *Thaïs* and bark out questions I couldn't answer. In the day-time the word would be honked at me by the motor horns in Smokeover streets, and the wheels of the railway carriage under my feet would fall into a monotonous chant of "problem, problem."

The prospects of my Opening Address grew darker and darker and a dreadful fear came over me that I should have nothing to say. Indeed I dreamed of that very thing. I saw myself on the platform of the Smokeover City Hall, standing alone with the great organ just behind me. Before me was a packed audience of four thousand people and the row of reporters all ready with book and pencil to take down my address. And there stood I, absolutely tongue-tied and conscious that I was looking an imbecile. Then the whole audience would suddenly start to its feet and roar out 'problem'; and I would awake in terror.

Naturally I could not refrain from seeking advice, so great was my distress. Meeting Smith one day in the street I told him of the difficulty I was in and made a clean breast of my condition. He was most sympathetic and encouraging. He said that to his knowledge several of the leading men in the Party had been through a similar experience, and that he himself, before introducing his Bill in the House, had been in an awful funk, but had nevertheless brought off the best speech of his life. Funk before making a speech, he said, was a good sign, and he was always telling the younger men of the Party not to be afraid of it. And then he repeated that story, which it always does me so much good to hear, about the two soldiers at the Battle of Waterloo; the one fearless and jolly, the other terrified and hardly able to hold his musket; and how the first said to the second, as the French cuirassiers were charging down on them, "Tom, you look frightened," and how Tom replied, "Yes: and if *you* were as frightened as I am you'd run away." Finally Smith wound up as follows. "As to a subject there's no question what you ought to take. Take 'the Problem of Labour and Capital.' It's the only problem worth discussing. Of course they've had it before, lots of times. But what does that matter? Give it 'em again. And go on giving it 'em until they come to their senses, which they've not done yet."

I parted from Smith much comforted, and more convinced than ever that the heart of the man is in the right place. But somehow the "Problem of Labour and Capital" did not attract me. I doubted

my competence to handle it, at least to the satisfaction of my audience.

So I wrote to Lady Wildwater, for whose intelligence I had come to have a great regard, and with whom I had had some correspondence since our meeting at Mrs. Temperley-Shadwell's. She entered into my difficulty more profoundly, though perhaps not more sympathetically, than Smith. She said in effect that the very difficulty I was in provided me with a subject for my Address. She then went on to remind me of what I had answered at the dinner party, when she asked me for the name of that "third self" of hers which bore the strain of the conflict between the other two; of how I had shouted the name 'God' to the surprise of the whole party and to the indignation of the ex-Prime Minister. "Now," said she, "the self which is in the difficulty you describe is unquestionably your *third self*. Explain that to the Problem Club. Take 'The Problem of the Third Self' for your subject. I undertake to say that in the whole history of the Club that subject has never been broached before. You can speak of it red-hot out of your personal experience, and that too is the kind of thing they don't often get at the Club. I have been thinking a great deal since the dinner about the third self being God. I'm sure you are right. We must talk it over more fully. Do come down to us in Scotland and bring Smith with you if you can. *Tell him the salmon fishing this year is excellent.*"

This was the best advice I had received so far. As I meditated on the 'problem' suggested by Lady Wildwater I thought I saw a distant light, like the

light which Christian saw at the end of the Valley of Humiliation, and the weight began to lift from my mind. Before nightfall the light had grown considerably and was beginning to break out all round me. I slept that night with no bad dreams.

But before sending the title of my Address to the Secretary, who was now anxious to announce it, I thought it wise to consult another adviser. This was Father Sebastian.

"Ah, my friend," he said, when I had told him all, "this is what I have hoped for. This is what I have prayed for, before the Blessed Altar and in many other places. My prayers under the oak tree are answered. My prayers beside the dying fish are answered. Father Balmaine, good soul, thought I was praying for its capture. My friend, I was praying for the salvation of your soul, then as always. I was praying that when the proud waters went over your head you would call *for us*. And now you are calling."

"You are forcing the pace unduly, Father," I answered, "and not quite fairly, I think. I am not calling you to help in saving my soul but in choosing a subject for my Opening Address."

"Perhaps the two things are less far apart than you suppose," said the Jesuit. "But what are the subjects you have been thinking of?"

I expounded, as well as I could on the spur of the moment, my notions about "the third self" and about 'God' being the right name for it. He listened with the utmost attention, once or twice lifting his eyebrows as though surprised. When I had done he said:

"I see what you mean. What you have told me is a rather picturesque way of presenting Hegel's doctrine of the 'reconciliation of opposites in a higher unity'—your third self—all of which was much more cogently stated by Aristotle in his doctrine of the Mean. Your thesis is either that, or it is a mere idle speculation. But believe me you will do no good by introducing this subject to your Club. You will only add one more drop to the ocean of bewilderment in which it swims. Your Address, if you deliver it well, may contribute a little to the prosperity of the Club, but it will make no real difference to the people who hear it. If you are lucky some of them will say 'That was a fine Address, wasn't it? The best Opening Address I have heard at the Club.' And you may get a few condescending criticisms from your philosopher friends. And the women, no doubt, will think you have made a wonderful discovery and talk of it for a fortnight at their afternoon teas. But after that it will be clean forgotten, swept away in the general torrent of Talk. Then, of course, there are the nonconformist ministers and the Broad Churchmen. They are getting very hard-up for subjects to preach about, and when they see the report of your Address in the morning's paper, they are sure to pounce upon your best points and make play with them next Sunday. In that way your grand idea has probably a month's lease of life. But after that—total oblivion."

This was a wet blanket, the more so because I recognized the truth of it, and in my discouragement I could think of only one thing to say.

"Father Sebastian," I asked, "if you were giving

the Opening Address yourself, what subject would you take? What would you say to the Club?"

"I would tell them that they are as sheep without a shepherd."

"But do you advise *me* to say that?"

"No. *You* cannot say it because you don't believe it. I do, and you asked me what *I* would say. But tell me something. All this about the third self, and the third self being 'God'—do you really *believe* it, or do you value it merely because you think it can be worked up into a telling Address to the Problem Club? Would you go to the stake in defence of it? Would you even risk your year's income on the chance of it being true?"

"Those are searching questions," I answered—rather evasively I must confess—"and if they were pressed home we should all have to hold our peace."

"Which would not be the greatest of calamities. In any case they are questions that need to be asked, especially when you are choosing a subject for your Opening Address. Did I not say that the choosing of your subject has something to do with the saving of your soul? It is a test of your sincerity. Let me tell you this. Most of what passes for belief among you Protestants is a mere hypnosis to which you have been brought by the fluency of your tongues. This precious 'third self' of yours; you don't really believe in it at all, but you *think* you do because it leads up to the sort of Opening Address you want to give. You think it will make your Address a resounding success. You hope it will draw a big crowd. You expect to be applauded for it. But if you knew that only twenty people would come to hear you, or that

you would be hissed at the conclusion of every sentence, and that the papers next day would describe your performance on the 'third self' as an imbecility, I venture to say you would choose another subject. And so with you Protestants in general. You are not asking yourselves what you really believe. You are asking what will draw congregations. And you confuse the one question with the other."

"And suppose," I said, "that we were to begin asking ourselves what we really believed—what would happen?"

"You would all join the Church of Rome," he answered quickly.

"Only to find," I retorted, for I was a little nettled, "that we had got out of the frying-pan into the fire. For we should then know that we had joined the Church of Rome not because we really believed in it, but because we were incapable of standing on our own legs."

"Than which no better reason could be given for believing in the Church of Rome," said the Jesuit.

"What seems to you the best reason," I answered, "is for me precisely the worst. And there we reach a point beyond which it is impossible for either of us to advance one hair's breadth."

The tension was high at that moment and I believe that both of us felt—I know that I did—that if either of us had increased the pressure in the slightest degree the tie that held us in relation as two human beings would have snapped. I was anxious to avoid that at all costs. So I made shift to find a new point of departure and I think Father Sebastian was grateful to me for doing so.

"Let us agree," I said, "that 'the Problem of the Third Self' won't do as the subject of my Address. I think you are right about that. There is nothing new in it; the notion is really as old as the hills; and I should only be doing over again what has been done a thousand times by far abler men than I. If they don't hear Aristotle and Hegel they are not likely to hear me, and my attempt to popularize their doctrine would probably be a dead failure. So that's off. And now can you suggest another subject, for I am about at my wits' end?"

Father Sebastian got up and began pacing the room. Suddenly he stopped short with an exclamation. "Why, yes!" he cried, "the subject has been under your hand all the time and you haven't seen it. Nor have I—till this moment. This Problem Club that you are addressing—*have they ever asked themselves what a problem is?*"

"No," I answered. "I have examined their Minute Book. And that question has never been raised."

"Then raise it. Take for your subject 'What is a Problem?' Or if you like, 'The Problem of the Problem.' "

"I can raise the question easily enough," I said, "but I doubt if I can answer it."

"The very point!" cried the Jesuit, his face glowing. "Your inability to answer the question itself furnishes the answer to it! Now listen to me. The number of problems in the universe is exactly equal to the number of its atoms, *plus* their possible combinations with one another, *plus* the number of created spirits, *plus* their relations to one another and

to the atoms, *plus* the relations of every one of them, and of the world to which they belong, to God. Tell that to your Problem Club and wish them good success in their efforts to get through the list. Tell them also that if they discuss any one of these problems for a million years, for ten million years, they will not solve it, but only be so much further from the solution. Remind them that, since the Club was founded, they have not solved a single problem in their Minute Book, but only discovered new ones that are insoluble. Then go on to say that all these problems, both those that they have discussed and those they have not, may be divided into two classes: first, those that have to be asked before they can be answered, and, second, those that have to be answered before they can be asked. The second class, you may inform them, is by far the more important. It includes the problem of God, which is necessarily answered before it is asked. For how can anybody know what he means by the *Problem* of God, unless he knows what he means by *God?* And if he knows what he means by God, God is no longer problematic to him. As St. Augustine says: God is a being whom we could not seek unless we had already found."

"Stop, Father!" I cried, for he was going ahead a little too rapidly. "Stop there. What you have just said is my doctrine of the 'third self.' Unless the 'third self' had the answer to all problems up its sleeve, the other selves wouldn't know how to ask them: they wouldn't even know what they were talking about."

"Not so far wrong," he answered, "but too pic-

turesque for abstract reasoning, which yields the only sure results. Let me go on. Having told your Club about the problems which have to be answered before they can be asked——"

"In which," I interrupted, "we must include all the problems of art."

"Good—having told them about those that must be answered before they can be asked, tell them next about the other kind, those that must be asked before they can be answered. The problems of mathematics for instance. Consult the Professor of Mathematics and he will tell you this interesting little fact: all the stages in the solution of a mathematical problem, an equation in algebra for example, are simply so many steps in the process of *clarifying the question*, and when at last you get the question transparently clear, that transparent form of the question *is the answer*. The answer lies embedded in the question and all the mathematician does is to clear away the obscurities that hide it. So the two classes of problems are ultimately one. The only problem in the universe to which an absolutely certain answer is possible is the problem of God, which is answered before it is asked; were it not for that, your precious Club would not even know what is meant by the Problem of This or the Problem of That. Except in a universe eternally illuminated by the light of God we should not be able even to ask the time of day, and the very clock face would be invisible."

"Father," I said, "the Smokeover Problem Club will never swallow that."

"Of course they will not. But did I not tell you

that they were sheep without a shepherd? But give it them all the same and take the consequences; and don't forget to wind up by telling them they are lost sheep. They will not applaud you; they will be horribly bored; and you will see them streaming out of the City Hall long before you have finished, and the philosophic critics will be very contemptuous; but you will have the satisfaction of feeling that your subject has been chosen because you really believe in it, and not because you think it will lead up to a telling speech. Let your subject be 'What is a Problem?' "

At that moment there was a tap on the door of the Father's room, and there entered a young man clothed in a black robe. He handed me a telegram which had been sent on from my house. It came from Mallingford, and I read as follows:

"Am in a fix. Tip-top story in your line of business. Chance of your life. Come immediately and bring a strong man with you. Paradise Smith, if you can get him.—Timbertree."

I read the telegram again and again, the meaning remaining 'obscure' to me, as the inscription was to Dante which he saw on the Gate of Hell. Finally I handed it to Father Sebastian.

"This telegram," I said, "is from Sir William Timbertree, the owner of Mallingford Abbey. For some reason I cannot fathom he has lately taken a fancy to me. He seems to be in some sort of difficulty and wants me to help him out. What do you make of it?"

Father Sebastian was slow to reply. He walked

to and fro with the telegram in his hand, pausing from time to time to read it again. At length he said:

"Mallingford Abbey is a strange place. In some respects a bad place. I felt it acutely that day when I sat under the oak tree. There was an obstacle in the way of my prayers. The powers of darkness are at work in that Abbey; so too are the powers of light. Believe me, this is no mere coincidence. The hand of God is directing the course of events. Treat that telegram as coming from heaven. Go; for great issues may depend upon it. And perhaps," he added with a smile, "you will come back with a clearer knowledge than you now have of what a 'problem' is."

"I shall go," I said.

"And before you go, repeat the sufficient prayer of all the saints."

"What is that?" I asked.

"*In tuas manus, Domine, meam animam commisi.*"

A few minutes later I was in the front sitting-room of No. 24 Hooker Road. Smith was having "high tea" with his bonnie family, facing the monster pike in the glass case. I showed him the telegram.

"Well," he said, "that's a corker! What does the old plutocrat want with *me?* I wonder if he means to join the Party? Often thought he would since I met him that day. He's a Labour man at heart, mind you, is Timbertree. Born in my class and remembers things—same as I do. Here, mother,

get my engagement book and see what's on to-morrow."

"Nothing on to-morrow," said the wise and admirable one, reading from the book, "but full up next day—Coal Inquiry Commission in the morning, Party Funds meeting in the afternoon, and address to the Y.M.C.A. on the Class War in the evening. And Tom coming back from Oxford at four o'clock. You must only stay the one night, father; for you know you wouldn't like to be away when Tom comes back. And do try the sheets before you get into bed, and if they feel at all sticky to the touch take them off and sleep in the blankets. It must be a damp place, that Abbey, built in the hollow where it is."

"I'll go," said Smith, "as soon as I've finished this plate of ham and had another cup of tea. Anyhow, I'd like to have it out with Timbertree about that operating box of his. I can wipe the floor with him on that point. And between you and me, I wouldn't mind having another drink of water out of that old well. Best water I've tasted for forty years. And you go and pack my bag, mother, while I'm finishing my tea. Here, George" (this to a bright-looking lad of thirteen), "take this gentleman's reply telegram round to the Post Office."

The reply ran, "Arriving by car with Smith about six."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A Tale of Milk and Water

MALLINGFORD ABBEY, as everybody knows, is one of the most beautiful domains in England. A vast park of rolling land, slopes of the brightest green rising up the woodland heights, noble and venerable trees dotted at spacious intervals over the open ground, with herds of great cattle reposing beneath, a clear stream running through wide water meadows and broadening out into a lake, —such are the natural features. In the midst, on ground somewhat depressed, stands the Abbey, one of the finest creations of the fourteenth century, the Church a pathetic ruin, but the residential portions, including the Abbot's quarters, the guest-rooms, the refectory, the kitchens, the dormitories, the scriptorium and the cloisters incorporated with marvellous skill into a masterpiece of domestic architecture. For centuries the estate had been in the possession of a noble family, but succumbing at last to the load of taxation which followed the war it was put up for sale and bought at the full value by the great surgeon, Sir William Timbertree, a man risen from the ranks, who looked on this stately acquisition as a prize won by the skill and cunning of his wonderful hands.

In many respects the change of masters was for-

tunate for Mallingford Abbey. It is true that Sir William's house-parties included many vulgar people who would hardly have been admitted to the Abbey in the old days except as sightseers, but in all that pertained to the tenantry, to the upkeep of the estate, to the preservation of natural beauties and historical values, he was a model owner. You might hear the cockney accent in his drawing-room, and the gentlemen you went out shooting with would often miss 'ares and 'it pheasants (or vice versa), but throughout the length and breadth of his estate you would search in vain for a broken fence rail, a neglected tree, an uncut hedge or a feckless farmer. If an arch was threatening to fall in the ruined church, down came the best architect from London and up went the scaffolding, and if the job cost a thousand pounds Sir William considered the money well spent. He was a lover of great trees and fine turf; every tree on the estate was treated as a personal friend of the owner, and the lawns in the Abbey grounds were a refreshing sight for tired eyes to see, and a soft carpet for tired feet to walk on. At all reasonable times the Park was open to the public, and though the trippers aften abused his generosity, he would calmly order a gang of men next day to obliterate every trace of the damage they had done, and would keep his gates open just as before. One thing only in the doings of these people moved him to immitigable wrath, and that was the sight of a piece of paper, a confectioner's bag, or a cardboard cigarette-case, left by careless picknickers in the woods or on the lawns; and many are the stories of the sudden apparition of Sir William in the midst

of such offenders, of his purple countenance, of his flourished stick, of the vollied oaths and dreadful imprecations that rent the shuddering air, no matter what ladies were present or what clergymen within hearing.

As Smith and I drove through Mallingford Park, about six o'clock of the midsummer day indicated in the last narrative, we at once received the impression that the whole place was deserted. A strange air of solitude and lifelessness seemed to rest on everything. Not a human being was visible in any direction. There was nobody to open the lodge gates for the car, there were no labourers round the home farm, no keepers patrolling the coverts or feeding the young pheasants, and the dynamo was not working in the power-house. Presently we passed a group of pedigree shorthorns, with enormously distended udders, lowing piteously. Evidently they had not been milked that afternoon.

"Looks to me," said Smith, "as though there'd been a strike. Whole shop closed down. But it's a shame not to milk those cows. There ought to have been a special clause about that."

Smith's suspicions were confirmed on our arrival at the main entrance to the Abbey. The immense oak door was opened by Sir William himself.

"Come in, gentlemen," he said, "and let me carry your bags. I'm all alone in Mallingford Abbey. Ghosts! The Abbey's haunted, and all the servants, men and women, cleared out to the last Jack and Judy of 'em. The last went this morning. A first-class panic and stampede—everybody running for his

life with a ghost behind him—except *me*. We'll have to get our own meals, and carry our own coals and make our own beds, and not the first time I've done it either, eh, Mr. Smith? And meanwhile we'll lay the ghosts."

"But what does all this mean, Sir William?" I asked.

"Bunkum," said Sir William. "What else can it mean? But come in. I say, Mr. Smith, have you forgotten how to use those big fists of yours. I remember what you did with 'em before you turned pacifist. I did a bit in that line of business myself, in the good old days, when fortune had not parted you and me. There's somebody playing monkey tricks in this Abbey and I want you and our friend here to help me in laying him out."

"I can hit as hard as most men," said Smith, "and if anybody plays the ghost on me he's liable to get hurt. But before I use my fists on ghosts or anything else I'm going to use 'em for milking those shorthorns of yours. My father was an agricultural labourer with nine children and seventeen shillings a week, and I can't remember the time when I couldn't milk. Where do you keep the buckets? The poor things are in agony."

"I can milk as well as you, my boy," said Sir William, "and don't you put on snobbish airs about your father, or you'll find yourself in the wrong box. My father wasn't a duke any more than yours was. If it hadn't been that I was laying the ghosts this afternoon I'd have milked the cows myself. Come along. We'll milk 'em together, and our friend here shall judge who's the best milkman. And

while we're milking 'em I'll tell you about the ghosts."

We went out into the Park, drove the animals into Sir William's model cow-house, and presently I had the satisfaction of seeing the Labour Leader and the owner of Mallingford Abbey seated on three-legged stools, with their heads propped against the bellies of the cows, milking away for all they were worth.

"I'm not as much out of practice as I thought I should be," said Sir William. "Operating keeps your hands supple. Look at my fingers, my boy! Not often you see long white fingers like those on the son of a bricklayer. They don't match my red face, do they, not 'alf! I have 'em massaged every day. Whenever I look at my 'ands I say, 'Bill, behave yourself like a gentleman!' But when I see my red face in the glass I just say, 'O Lord!' How's Paradise getting on with that roan cow? Has speechifying spoilt his hands?"

"He's running you very close, Sir William," I said. "It will be a near thing, like the Paradise election."

"Majority of twenty-seven on a poll of nineteen thousand," said Smith from beneath his cow; and the milk went hissing into his bucket faster than ever. "By the Lord Harry, I'll get three gallons out of this one. But tell us about the ghost, Timbertree."

"The old monks have begun to walk," said Sir William, "it began the night after the——"

The last word was lost, for at that moment Sir William's cow, aware that strange hands were at

work upon her, lashed her tail round, catching the baronet a violent clout on the side of the head and knocking his hat off into the milkpail. Whereupon there was a burst of very bad language, which I shall not record, from the more aristocratic side of the cowstall. Smith, hearing the uproar, stopped milking and peeped under his cow's belly to see what had happened; which the cow not approving of also lashed round her tail, knocking Smith clean off his stool, and I verily believe that had it not been for his presence of mind, which has served the Party so well at several dangerous crises, his pail would have been upset and the contents sent swimming down the gutter. But just as Ulysses when suffocating in the deep waters had the wit to keep hold of his plank, so Smith never let go of his pail but kept it upright without a drop spilt—a fact which I here chronicle as testimony that Smith can be trusted to play the man in a tight place.

When order had been restored to the House, and the supply of appropriate expletives exhausted on both sides of it, Sir William resumed his interrupted narrative, to the accompaniment of the hissing milk.

"They began to walk—the old monks did—on the night after the Pageant, when I took the part of Abbot. Of course that night we had the house full—the biggest house-party I've ever had in the Abbey—and some lively sparks among 'em too, both the men and the women—people who'd taken part in the Pageant. There was Lady Wildwater."

"Who?" I asked.

"Lady Wildwater—everybody knows her. And there was the Wesleyan minister from Buckstone

Magna, not much spark in that one, but very fond of talking to Lady Wildwater. He took the part of the Pope's Legate—we made a point of having all denominations represented—and Lady Wildwater was Queen Philippa. Well, after dinner, when all the rest of them were having a pillow-fight in the old monks' dormitory, the Pope's Legate and Queen Philippa said they'd like to take a walk among the ruins of the Abbey Church, so as to see 'em by moonlight. That was about eleven o'clock. We began dancing in the ballroom almost as soon as they'd gone, me leading off with the Abbess of Much Wenlock, just to give 'em a start. Presently up come three or four of the monks wanting to know what had become of Lady Wildwater—keep still, you brute!—who's the best dancer in London Society, a pupil of Gwen Penderghoste's, whom I used to see at Drury Lane when I was walking the hospitals, and I can tell you she was just *it*, was Gwen, and there's never been another like her. Well, as I was saying, up come the monks, and when I told 'em she was taking a moonlight walk with the Pope's Legate one of 'em says, 'I'll wring that Legate's neck when he brings her back.' So me and the Abbess sat down to watch the fun, and I can tell you it made both of us laugh like Nebuchadnezzar to see those monks and nuns foxtrotting it round the ballroom. But no Lady Wildwater.

"Well, it was getting on towards midnight, when Chaucer and the Black Prince, two artist chaps from London, came round to where I was sitting out with the Abbess, and asked me if I'd take 'em to the Picture Gallery and show 'em my big Velasquez.

So off we went to see the pictures and I was just explaining to them how Velasquez painted velvet—for I know a thing or two about painting, look at my hands!—when in comes Lady Wildwater from the north end of the gallery, looking mighty handsome I can tell you, with a headdress like a church steeple, but with a face as grave as a saint's.—Hold up, I say, and keep that tail quiet!—With a face as grave as a saint's, no colour at all, but her eyes full of fire and flashing round in a way to frighten you. 'Hullo, Queen,' says I, 'you and the Legate have had a long walk. And there's Thomas à Becket kicking up the devil of a shindy because he says you promised him three dances.' 'Silence!' says she, with a look that almost burned me up, 'it's high time this outrage came to an end; and if you can't end it, I will. Come away with me into the smoke-room. I've something to tell you.' So into the smoke-room we went, and what kind of a story do you think she told me? She said that she'd sat down alone among the ruins of the nave, the Legate going off by himself, when all of a sudden, as she was thinking of the old times, the place lit up and filled with incense, and there was the church crowded with monks and a priest at the altar saying Mass. 'Oh,' says I, 'you fell asleep and dreamt it all. Go back to the ballroom and dance it off.' 'No,' says she, 'I dance no more in this world. My hour has come. Show me the way to my room.' 'There's only one way,' I says, 'and that's through the ball-room. The stairs are at the other end of it'—for of course I couldn't take her through the servants' quarters. 'Then I must pass through the ballroom?' says she. 'You must,' I

says, 'and I'll come with you.' 'No,' says she, 'I go alone.' And out she went without another word.

"Of course if it had been anybody but Lady Wildwater I should have said 'Bunkum.' But she isn't that kind of woman, and *you* wouldn't have said 'Bunkum' either if you'd seen her that night. And now listen to what happened next."

We had reached the threshold of the supernatural and I was impatient to hear what happened next. But I was not to hear it told from under a cow's belly. For at this moment the realities of the natural world brought another interruption, less violent, it is true, than before, but sufficient to turn the current of our minds into a new channel and postpone the completion of Sir William's story for some hours. Perhaps a kindly Providence was attending to the fitness of time and place, and guiding the course of events accordingly. But the reader, if he chooses, may put it down to chance, or to the general nature of human life which, as every philosopher knows, is a sequence of the unexpected and full of interruptions both tragic and comic.

For the enlightenment of those philosophers who define a cow as "the animal that fears a pointed umbrella," and milk as "that which the milkman delivers," and of elegant persons in general whose way of life has not brought them into contact with the sordid details of the agricultural vocation, I must here interpose the following item of knowledge, namely: that when a cow is deprived of her calf at the weaning time, she will often refuse to yield her milk to the man on the stool, no doubt

regarding his proceedings as a wrong done to the rising generation.

Now it so happened that the Labour Leader found himself at this moment dealing with a cow in the aforesaid predicament of indignation. Not a drop of milk rewarded his exertions. After several futile attempts he communicated the state of affairs to the baronet.

"We'll soon set that right," said the ingenious Sir William. "Come with me."

Smith rose from his stool and we all proceeded into an adjoining chamber, used as a store place for foodstuffs. In the middle of this room, surrounded with sacks of meal and piles of oil cake, I was astonished to see a very lively-looking young calf with exceptionally brilliant eyes. It was standing in the attitude which a calf takes when sucking its dam. I was the more astonished because the creature, though eyeing us very suspiciously, didn't move, but defiantly stood his ground, evidently determined to resist any attempt that might be made to convert him into provender for the human species to dine upon; and I was about to ask Sir William the meaning of so strange a phenomenon, when he picked up the animal by the hind legs, and brought it down with a bang on the broad back of Smith. It was a calf stuffed with hay by an expert in taxidermy.

"That is a little invention of my own," said Sir William. "We'll set it working."

We then returned to the cowstall; the calf was carefully placed by Sir William in its natural position beneath the cow; the cow looked round and, seeing the calf, forthwith yielded a full flow to the

Labour Leader, who had now resumed his seat on the milking stool.

"She thinks the calf's getting the milk," said Sir William, giving me a nudge.

"It's a beautiful contrivance," said I, "but not moral. The Society for the Prevention of Humbug to Animals ought to prosecute you."

"Look here," said Smith, showing the side of his face that was not resting on the cow's belly, and speaking in a tone which I had often heard in altercations between working men, "look here, Bill Timbertree. You're a liar when you say that's your invention. There was one at a farm where I worked as a boy in Northumberland, fourteen hours a day and four shillings a week. They call it 'a tulcan calf.' Have *you* never heard of it before?"—this last to me.

"Of course I have," I answered. "And Sir William is certainly lying when he says he invented it. Why, it's the principle of all democratic budgets. Nothing like a tulcan calf for persuading the poor man that the rich is being taxed for his benefit. I'm told the Labour Party keeps one in the House of Commons. Without a tulcan calf no Chancellor of the Exchequer could make his Budget speech."

"Get out!" said Smith, milking furiously at the deluded cow, "get out! That's not economics. That's trying to be smart. Talk sense."

The milking over, we completed the operations by putting the milk through the power-driven separator, and deposited the cream in the butter-room.

"And now," said Smith, "I've got a big thirst on me, and I'm going to have a drink of water out of

the Old Well. Put your coat on, Bill, and show us the way."

"Right, ho! 'Arold," said the Baronet. "And this other bloke shall come along with us. But we'll stop at the Abbey on the way and I'll get a basket of tommy out of the larder."

I was struck by the sudden emergence of this style of language into Sir William's conversation. Under no circumstances could his diction be taken as a model of elegance, either as to the choice of words or the mode of pronouncing them. But, ordinarily, that element in his nature which had produced his long white fingers checked his use of the grosser forms of speech and kept most of his h's in their place. From the first moment, however, of his contact with Smith I had noticed that whenever the two men addressed one another Sir William would revert to pure cockney, both in his phrases and in their pronunciation. And a corresponding change was taking place in Smith. His ordinary language, though not very polished, was never impure English and sometimes extremely well phrased—a thing that struck me with admiration, knowing, as I did, that his 'education' had been next to nil. Hardly ever would he misplace the aspirate. But now, in talking to Sir William, he began to do so freely. And I confess it pleased me. It meant to me that the two men had found a point of contact, and that they were drawing together—no longer Sir William Timbertree, Baronet, and the Rt. Hon. Harold Smith, M.P., but just Bill and 'Arold. Clearly they understood one another far better than I understood either of them.

The distance from the cowhouse to the Monks' Well was fully half a mile and I had hoped that Sir William would complete his ghost story on the way. But Smith, who, so far, had shown a singular indifference to the supernatural side of our adventure, started him off on another track, and by a leading question too.

"Well, Bill," he said, "when yer going to join the Labour Party?"

Sir William: "When the Labour Party's worth joining."

Smith: "Wot d'yer mean?"

Sir William: "Wot I say."

Smith: "Wot's wrong with the Party now?"

Sir William: "Everything."

Smith: "Tell me wot."

Sir William: "You don't know what Labour means. You're not a Labour Party. You want as little of it as you can get. You're against Labour."

Smith: "Dunno wot yer mean."

Sir William, who was walking a pace or two ahead, and shouting his answers back to Smith, here stopped suddenly, faced round and held up his two hands with the fine fingers outspread in front of Smith.

"Look at them fingers, 'Arold," he said. "That's Labour. Do you want yer brain taken out of yer 'ead? And properly mended and put back again in tip-top workin' order? Them fingers can do it and you'll be at work a well man in six weeks, and you'll pay me down my living wage of three hundred guineas for the job. That's Labour and that's Wages."

Smith: "You won't get 'em from me."

Sir William: "Orl right! Then keep yer brain where it is and order yer coffin. For there's only one man in England that can do the job without making a corp of yer—and that's *me!*"

Smith: "And you call three hundred guineas a livin' wage!"

Sir William: "I do—*for them fingers.* Takes a lot to keep my fingers lively, me son, and don't you make any mistake. Look 'ere, 'Arold. You can nationalize my box of instruments. But you can't nationalize them fingers. And wot's the use of the instruments without the fingers? Means of production, me son. You won't produce much with my box of tools unless you have my fingers to work 'em. *Mine,* mind you. Get another man to do it and you'll be a corp before you come out of the chloroform. Learn that, young feller, and when you've learnt it I'll join the Party."

As I listened to this lively interchange there came into my mind the image of a boxing match, in which Sir William was putting in all the blows and Smith merely dodging them. The reason for these delaying tactics on the part of Smith soon became apparent.

"I'm too thirsty to talk," he said, "but wait till I've had a drink of water from the old well, and I'll wipe the floor with you."

The well was deep, and the water had to be hauled from the depths by a winch and bucket, for everything had been restored by Sir William to fifteenth-century conditions. As I took my turn at the winch, where Smith had soon to relieve me,

I was thinking of Father Balmaine and the strain on his solitary button, when one of the buttons that held my own braces at the back flew off.

"Bad work!" said Sir William, who had observed the phenomenon. "Bad work. And a new pair of trousers too. Change your tailor."

"It was sweated labour that stitched that button on," said Smith, as he worked away at the winch. "What about foreign matches now, young man? Pity my old woman isn't here to put it right."

Smith's point about the button went home, but I was relieved from having to answer it (which I doubt if I could have done to the satisfaction of my own conscience) by the arrival of the dripping bucket from the depths below. We all drank, Smith ecstatically, pausing between the draughts to assure us that he had never tasted such water since he was a boy. Nor had I. It seemed to me that I was drinking a pure product of the Spirit.

"And now, Bill," said Smith, as he wiped his mouth with his coat sleeve, "I'm ready to take you on about your box of tools."

"And don't forget his fingers," I added.

So, having drawn up another bucketful, we sat down beside the Holy Well, the bucket standing in our midst with a great horn beaker to drink from. Sir William opened out the contents of his basket, most of which had an epicurean quality, such as *pâté de foie gras*, hot-house peaches and Muscat grapes, not quite in keeping with our liquid fare. And we began to eat and to drink and to argue about "the social problem," Smith wetting his whistle at frequent intervals from the bucket.

I say we argued; but my part in the transaction was that of a listener, my arguments, such as they were, being addressed to myself. Never before had such an opportunity come my way for hearing "the social problem" discussed by men standing at the heart of it. Each of my two companions was essentially a working man by birth and vocation, the one representing Labour stripped to the waist and covered with sweat, the other representing Labour in the full dress of a skilled profession, with long white fingers, massaged every day to be kept fit for their job. At the essential point the two men had firm common ground, and the consequence was that the argument between them had an atmosphere and a character rarely found in the ordinary type of argument between the Individualist and the Socialist. I noticed that Smith never challenged Sir William's statement that "you and me belong to the same class." They spoke the same language, hit out with the same elemental vigour, and understood one another perfectly.

Though the tone of the argument was new to me the substance of most of it was familiar enough. It turned of course on the threadbare question between public and private ownership of the means of production. If I were to rehearse it the reader would find little that he has not heard a hundred times before. And he would find the same inconclusiveness in the general result, the reason being, as usual, that the leading terms of the argument were used in different senses by the two disputants.

For example, when Smith spoke of the "means of production" you saw railways, organized ma-

chinery, coal, iron, and so on; when Sir William spoke of them you saw his operating theatre, his instruments, his anæsthetics, his antiseptics and his bandages. When Smith spoke of the 'workers' you saw a crowd of men in stained overalls issuing from a mass production factory in Smokeover; when Sir William spoke of them you saw himself and his assistants in white coats bespattered with blood, and the nurses in uniform, all trained to act on the instant at a sign or a look from the operating surgeon. When Smith spoke of the "process of industry" you saw the great wheel revolving in the power-house and the iron filings flying from the lathes; when Sir William spoke of it you saw the blood spurt from an artery, a ligature instantly applied, and a quick sign indicating that it was done. When Smith spoke of Labour you saw picks swinging, hammers breaking the rocks, shovels tossing the coal into the furnace; when Sir William spoke of it you saw a poised and delicate hand, seemingly motionless, but guiding a tiny instrument along the line of a razor edge where a difference in a fraction of a millimetre was the difference between life and death. When Smith spoke of "the finished product" you saw the shop-windows in Smokeover filled with articles exposed for sale and ticketed with the price; when Sir William spoke of it you saw a man cheerfully walk out of a hospital who, six weeks before, had been dolefully brought in on a stretcher.

The fiercest argument raged round the "box of tools," on which Sir William had flung down his challenge to Smith. But Smith's 'box' contained every machine in the country, power-driven for the

most part; while Sir William's 'box' could be carried in one hand, and there was only one set of fingers in England that could use the implements inside.

As these ambiguities developed it became clear to me, clear as the water we had just drawn from the Holy Well, that within the Labour Movement itself there is "a class distinction" more sharply defined than any that can be found elsewhere—the distinction between the aristocracy of workmanship and the proletariat of drudgery; and the prospect dawned before me of a great conflict arising in the future between these two ends of the Labour scale. At this point the difference between the two men seemed to me irreconcilable, and the difference arose from the fact that, as "working men," the two stood on common ground. A beautiful instance, I thought, of unity breaking out into difference.

As to the result of the contest my impression was that the honours were evenly divided. Sir William fought hard to retain his "box of tools" as his own "private property in the means of production," but in the end Smith forced him to give it up and got it fairly and squarely nationalized—all scientific instruments the property of the State and only to be used under State license and supervision. *But Sir William's long white fingers remained his own.* By no manner of means could Smith convert *them* into public property. No 'system' that he could devise would nationalize *them.* No 'Bills' that he could 'introduce' would bring them under State control. Fine as he made the meshes of his 'system,' and wide as he cast the net, the mysterious fingers slipped through and escaped him every time. The 'State'

might launch its thunders at Sir William's head, the voters might overwhelm him with crushing majorities, the Bills might come about him like the bulls of Bashan, the Red police might blockade him in Mallingford Abbey,—nay, the firing squad might have him up against the wall, but there he was, in every case, impregnably master of his long white fingers, which none could wrest from his private ownership, which none could will to do their office save Sir William Timbertree. The State might confer upon him the most generous of 'licenses' and assure him that the 'supervision' would be carried out with both eyes shut; but it always came to this—that Smith, wanting "his brain mended," had to present himself as a suppliant before Sir William Timbertree, and implore him, in the name of their common humanity, to be kind enough to perform the operation at whatever fee Sir William would be pleased to name. Thus the honours were divided: the Labour Leader getting the box of instruments, but the Baronet keeping his fingers.

Once indeed I thought it was all over with Sir William. Smith had got him with his back to the wall (I speak in a figure), a firing-squad at fifteen paces in front, twelve logical rifles pointed at the seat of life, and ten seconds left to decide whether or no he would surrender his rebellious fingers to State Control, the Labour Leader standing ready to drop the handkerchief. But the undaunted Baronet rose to the occasion like a hero of the olden time. His jolly red face beaming defiance and with a wink at me, who stood by watching the dreadful scene, he spread out his fine fingers, put them gracefully to

his nose and, looking Smith straight between the eyes, called out "Fire!" Whereupon the whole firing-squad fell flat on their faces and "became as dead men," like the Judge and the Jury at the trial of George Fox, while Sir William calmly walked away to perform another operation at three hundred guineas without so much as deigning to bestow a glance on his prostrate executioners.

So far as this conclusion affected myself, I mentally resolved that if ever I were in the unfortunate condition of wanting the professional services of Sir William I would, if possible, get the operation over and done with before the social revolution had nationalized his box of instruments. In fact I said so, that being the only remark I contributed to the discussion, with little effect, I must confess, upon Smith, who still suspected me of trying to be smart, though Sir William gave me an approving nod.

The shadows of the great oaks were no longer visible in the Park, the darkness was at hand, and the birds of day were all silent. Once more we dropped our bucket into the magic waters, hauled it creaking from the depths, took a draught all round, and then made our way amid the falling dews to the ghost-haunted Abbey. A great red moon hung low on the horizon; the night air was fragrant with the scent of new-mown hay; and two owls were hooting to one another in the woods.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Ghosts in Mallingford Abbey

THAT honesty is the best policy becomes doubtful when ghosts are in question. Indeed I am by no means sure that "the Problem of the Supernatural," which has figured several times on the Agenda of our Club, will ever be 'solved' by producing a 'policy' either honest or dishonest; though most of our members seem to think there is no other way of solving it. Until we know more of the ghosts' 'policy' towards ourselves, we can hardly lay down, much less carry out, a sound 'policy' towards them. Are *they* guiding themselves by the maxim that honesty is the best policy? Are there no "lying spirits" among them? Are none of them "Jesuits in disguise"? He would be a wise man who could answer. Between the best policy we can adopt towards the supernatural and the worst, perhaps the difference is not as great as we think. Here, if anywhere, is a legitimate sphere for Secret Diplomacy.

Suppose you have seen a ghost, or believe you have seen one, and publish a narrative of your experience for the edification of your fellow-men. What will happen? Believers in ghosts will be much impressed, and will point to your well-known honesty, and to the straightforward character of your narrative in proof that the apparition was veridical. Dis-

believers in ghosts, on the contrary, will say that the straightforward character of your narrative is mere artfulness, like that of Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe* and in the *Journal of the Plague*, while your well-known honesty, far from confirming your narrative, is itself impugned by the absurd story you have told; they will set you down, in short, as either a foolish knave or a knavish fool. If you try to defend yourself you will only get out of the frying-pan into the fire, just as I did when I tried to rebut the accusation that I was a Jesuit in disguise, a vicious circle from which I should never have been delivered had it not been for the brave action of my lamented friend, Colonel Capenhurst, V.C.

Let us now suppose that you have *not* seen a ghost but, desiring to exhibit yourself as an interesting personality before the world—and who so interesting as the man who has seen a ghost?—put forth a lying and artfully constructed story of your experiences in the spectre department. The result will be much the same as before. Believers in ghosts will say that though your reputation for truthfulness has hitherto stood none too high, and though you have often been convicted of romancing, *now at last you are beginning to tell the truth* and to pay a proper regard for matter of fact. Disbelievers in ghosts will say that they always suspected you of lying and have no further hesitation in publicly calling you a liar.

Lastly, let us suppose that, having seen a ghost, or believing that you have, and not wishing to have your family history investigated by the Society for Psychical Research, you flatly deny the vision when

challenged by your friends. "Your white face and chattering teeth when you came out of the haunted room," say your friends, "clearly prove that you saw the ghost." "No," say you, "I saw nothing. The room was very cold and I have not yet put on my winter underclothes. To-night I am suffering from a chill." You might have spared yourself the trouble of lying. "Ha!" the believers will say, "he saw the ghost, sure enough. But the ghost put him under an oath to keep the matter a secret. Ghosts often do that." "Nonsense!" the disbelievers will answer, "his white face and chattering teeth merely show that the man is what we have always told you he was—an arrant coward."

Under these circumstances who shall say that honesty is the best policy? Dishonesty would appear to be just as good.

What then is a person to do who has spent a night, as I did, in an ancient Abbey, reputed, on seemingly unimpeachable testimony, to be haunted, nay peopled, with the ghosts of fourteenth-century monks; an Abbey where Lady Wildwater (who, the reader may remember, sometimes fancied she was a ghost herself) had seen a crowd of them gathered for their devotions before the ruined altar of the Church; where the Wesleyan minister of Buckstone Magna, masquerading as the Pope's Legate, had been so overcome by her story that, without pausing to put on his overcoat or to say good night to Sir William Timbertree, he had bolted home arrayed as he was; where night after night the windy corridors had been alive with whispered voices and the shufflings of sandalled feet; where the maids had

seen the doors of their locked chambers fly open and felt the blankets torn from their beds; where the lady secretary, demanding "Who's there?" in response to gentle tappings on her bedroom door, had been distinctly answered "*Pax vobiscum*," and opening found no one; where the keepers, watching for poachers by the pheasantry had met three monks riding by on horseback; where the people in the Lodge, looking out of their window in the night, had seen the Holy Well brilliantly illuminated, and the monks coming and going with their buckets, and next morning had found the bolted gates of the Park thrown wide open; where the chef, preparing dinner in the ancient kitchen, had been badly burnt by a fall of blazing soot from a chimney that had just been swept; where the butler, arranging his bins in the cellar, had been struck from behind with a bottle of Jubilee port and drenched in the wine; where the boot boy had *seen* his brushes flung about by *invisible* hands and had the blacking thrown in his face? How, I say, is an honest man, or a dishonest man for the matter of that, who has spent a night in such an Abbey, to comport himself before the public? Shall he state plainly what he saw and did not see? Or shall he make up his tale as any lying spirit may lead him? Whichever he does it will come to the same thing, so far as his personal reputation for honesty enters into the question.

Obviously we are here in the presence of a very difficult problem in casuistry, which I shall not forget to bring before the Fathers at the Jesuit College, when the next opportunity comes my way. Meanwhile my resolution is taken.

Of the ghostly experiences that befell me (or did not befall me) that night I intend to say nothing, leaving the reader to draw what inferences he chooses as to my personal character—they cannot be worse than they would be if I told him what happened to me and what did not. Very strange experiences they certainly were; but every atom in the universe is just as strange, or stranger; and to the reader who loves the mysterious I can only say, "Study the atom and give my experience the go-by." One drop more in an infinite ocean of mystery is the very most it would amount to. But though he shall learn nothing of the ghosts that I saw or did not see, I will give him some information of another kind. I will tell him what happened when Smith, Sir William and I returned to the Abbey after our conversation at the Holy Well.

As we entered the door of the dark, silent Abbey, the great key of which Sir William had carried away in his pocket, the feeling that came over me was certainly not one of ghostly terror or apprehension. It was a feeling of pure depression, almost of boredom; and I think my two companions were affected in much the same way. Romantic enough the place certainly was, if one had been in the mood for romance, with the moonlight streaming through the high windows and the deep shadows under the Gothic arches. But all that found me uninterested and apathetic. What George Fox describes as "a waft of death" seemed to strike me in the face as I passed through the door, and I felt an uncontrollable impulse to sit down in one of the great chairs in the hall and go to sleep. This I believe is what

all three of us would have done had measures not been taken to prevent it.

Seeing how matters stood Sir William led the way into the great vaulted kitchen which had once been attached to the monks' refectory. The chef's bunch of keys was hanging on the wall, and by means of these we opened the store room, found the coffee, lit an electric stove and made a strong brew. This revived us, though Smith remarked that the water from the Old Well would have "done the trick" better for *him*, and wondered what the wise and admirable one would say if she caught him drinking strong coffee at that time of night—though he often did it in the House, he said, when she was not by to keep him in order.

The place being comfortable enough we sat down where we were, in front of an immense open fireplace, the rows of copper utensils that furnished the walls reflecting a reddish light on our surroundings. He preferred the kitchen to the sitting-room, said Smith, when he came home tired at night; and Sir William, producing his cigar case, seemed to endorse the sentiment. A silence like that of the grave reigned around us, broken only by the sound of our voices, which were strangely echoed by the vaulted roof above our heads.

We had been talking in low voices for perhaps half an hour when a thing happened which caused us all to leap to our feet and gave me a shock I am not likely to forget.

I had interrupted Sir William's story to tell him of another haunted house which I had once investigated for a learned society, and of which I could

make nothing. "The truth is," I said, "that people like ourselves are useless as ghost-hunters. Only ghosts can see ghosts. St. Paul says it in almost so many words. 'Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.' Now it's a pity Lady Wildwater isn't with us to-night. She's half a ghost."

"Give me the other half, then," said Sir William.

"She's a damned clever woman," said Smith. "Ghost or no ghost, she'll be heard of one of these days."

Barely were the words out of his mouth when, from one of the servants' sitting-rooms adjoining the kitchen, there suddenly broke out the loud and continuous ringing of an electric bell. It rang for a quarter of a minute and was followed by dead silence.

We rushed to the room from which the sound had come, and looked at the bell indicator. The pointer was down at "bedroom 27."

"Great Scot!" said Sir William, "that's the room in the Monks' Dormitory that Lady Wildwater occupied on the night of the Pageant. We'll examine it at once." And taking an electric torch he led the way.

As we were going the bell rang again, only a couple of seconds this time. We went back and the indicator was down as before at 27.

The door of 27, unlike the other doors in the corridor where it was situated, we found wide open, but the room was empty and silent and there was nothing to indicate that it had been recently occupied. It is true that as I stood in the room and peered about me, Sir William flashing his electric torch this way and that, there rose before me with startling lucidity

and clearness of outline—but no doubt it was illusion and not worth recording, for my nerves at that moment were in a high state of tension and I was not properly master of myself. So I will not record it.

"That open door puzzles me," said Sir William. "Between ourselves, I shall not be surprised if Lady Wildwater turns out to be at the bottom of the whole affair. She's capable of playing tricks."

"She is," I answered. "But let us go back to the kitchen and hear the rest of the story. And let us light the fire there. I feel this room mortally cold."

As we were traversing one of the passages that led us back to the kitchen, I could not help saying to Smith:

"I think Lady Wildwater has been heard of already."

He only laughed and said something about 'a mouse nibbling at the wire.' The supernatural is not in his line of business, and he is much better versed in economics than in the science of electricity.

Though the season was midsummer I insisted on the fire being lit, for the cold had penetrated to my bones, and I was shivering all over. There was a heap of logs in the old fireplace, the kitchen range being placed elsewhere, and we soon had a comfortable blaze. My companions seemed amused as they watched me warming myself. No doubt they thought I was frightened. And perhaps I was.

We sat thus till midnight, listening to Sir William's story of the ghostly happenings in Mallingford Abbey—a story which I am presently going to reproduce. At midnight we separated, Sir William

and Smith announcing that they were going to bed. To bed accordingly they went; but bed and I made no acquaintance that night. I spent the hours of it —fortunately they were not many at that time of year—in patrolling Mallingford Abbey, watching in its corridors, waiting in its great dark rooms, threading my way among vaults or up and down stone staircases, and wandering or sitting among the ruins of the Church. It was a wonderful experience, yet nerve-racking beyond imagination. I have no wish to go through another such. Let no one think I am boasting of my courage. I was never more terrified in my life: perhaps it was Smith's story of the two soldiers that kept me up. The cocks were crowing in the summer morning when I fell asleep, utterly exhausted, on a sofa in the smoking room.

Beyond that my lips are irrevocably sealed. Nor am I breaking the seal in saying that Father Sebastian's prediction was fulfilled. I came back from Mallingford Abbey with a clearer knowledge of what a 'problem' is than I had ever had before.

But now after long delay the reader shall learn what Sir William told us, as we sat among the copper pans in the old monks' kitchen. He shall learn that and something more.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Passage of Lady Wildwater

THE great Mallingford Pageant is described by one who witnessed it as "representing, in a series of *tableaux vivants*, the three hundred years of English History which ended with the Dissolution of the Monasteries." Over a thousand persons took part as actors in the show. The spectators, gathered mainly from Smokeover, Everstrike and the neighbouring towns, were a vast concourse. Special rows of seats had been reserved for students of Church History from Smokeover University and its affiliated theological colleges. Many of these were observed to be shedding tears during the concluding scene, when the Royal Commissioner announced to the assembled monks the impending Dissolution of the Abbey; and certainly it was a moving sight to see the long procession of disconsolate monks, headed by the white-haired and weeping Abbot, turn round after hearing their doom, and wind their way slowly through a narrow lane kept by the police between the parked cars of the spectators, singing the *Dies Iræ* as they marched. But these tragic emotions were short-lived, for the crowd had come out for a great merry-making, and even the theological students were soon dancing on the green with the maidens of Smokeover. Mallingford Park that day

resembled an enormous fair. A caterer from Smokeover was said to have lost a hundred pounds through a rash speculation in strawberry ices, the temperature having unexpectedly fallen in the morning to a point unfavourable to the sale of that commodity. What the spirit of the old monks, hovering in the mid-region, thought of it all is of course not recorded, but from what followed there is reason to believe that their sentiments were not of entire approval.

Of the thousand or more persons who had acted in the Pageant about three hundred had been invited by Sir William to the Abbey for the Great Ball which was to crown the revels, all to appear in the costumes they had worn during the performance, kings, queens, cardinals, bishops, abbots, abbesses, monks, nuns, nobles, knights, squires and men-at-arms: and of these three hundred about fifty formed the house party. Among the latter was Lady Wildwater, well known to the reader.

As to the part played by Lady Wildwater in the subsequent transactions much is obscure. We know already that she absented herself from the opening of the Ball on the pretext of visiting the ruined Church by moonlight, in the company of the Wesleyan Minister, she arrayed as Queen Philippa, he as the Pope's Legate. We know that while seated among the ruins she believed herself to have seen a vision of the old monks at prayer. We know that she refused to join the dancing on her return. But after? Next morning when the guests were assembling for breakfast word was passed round that she was gone, having left the Abbey with her maid in the early

hours without saying a farewell to anyone. For the rest of her movements we are driven to conjecture, aided by such stray glimpses, hints and remote intimations as we can gather by the way.

We see her clearly only for the few moments which followed her interview with Sir William in the smoking room.

Entering the ballroom, where a jazz band is tormenting the air with unspeakable music, and three hundred years of English History are dancing the fox trot in every conceivable variety of costume, her tall figure crowned with the towering head-dress of Queen Philippa, Lady Wildwater is immediately noticed by every one, the whisper runs round that she has come back, and Thomas à Becket is observed to be leading his partner out of the dance, a fairer than she having appeared upon the scene. But Lady Wildwater, though seen by all, herself sees none; though awaited by many, she is indifferent to each. With head erect she glides forward, like an apparition from another world, casting glances about her which seem to say she holds that scene "in great contempt." Thus she threads her way through the couples, they pausing to give her passage and to watch her progress, until she reaches the further end of the ballroom, passes out, and is presently seen, through the glass doors, ascending the staircase that leads to the Monks' Dormitory. This is the last that is seen of her that night. We may call it "the Passage of Lady Wildwater through the Ballroom."

When Lady Wildwater entered the ballroom at the one extremity the ball was at its height. When she passed out at the other it was at an end. At

the moment of her entry there were a hundred couples engaged in the dance; when she reached the middle of the room half of them had paused to watch her, or to let her pass; these increased as she went on, until at the moment of her exit every couple had stopped and was gazing through the glass door at her retreating figure as it ascended the great stone staircase. The music still played, but not another step was danced that night, by king, queen, cardinal, monk or nun. It was as though a "waft of death" had passed over the ballroom.

For a few seconds the halted couples stood motionless. Then one by one you might have seen them slowly and painfully drift to the sides of the room and sit down on chairs and settees, or even on the floor, propping their heads against the wall, a strange look of weariness on every face. Meanwhile the music is going to pieces; the piano is getting out of time with the violins; the 'cello gives a hideous screech. Then, suddenly, all the instruments stop together, a profound silence falls on the crowd, and the sitting figures ranged round the walls sink deeper and deeper into a bottomless lethargy.

As to how long these conditions lasted the accounts are hopelessly at variance. Some say half an hour, other not more than a minute. Sir William himself refuses to answer the question, not knowing whether he was awake or dreaming. Evidently the whole company had lost the power of reckoning time, for there is a depth of weariness, as there is a height of activity, where the distinction between time and eternity is lost. I am prepared to believe that the whole phenomenon came and went in a few seconds.

Be that as it may, the silence was suddenly ended by a piercing scream from a woman dressed as a nun, who sat on the floor midway down the room with her head leaning against the wall. Under ordinary conditions a storm of hysteria would have broken out. But this did not happen. At the sound of the scream the whole company seemed to wake from its torpor and stood upon its feet. Some yawned and stretched themselves, some gazed around them in bewilderment, some asked for brandy or ran to fetch it for their partners. But all realized that the ball was at an end. The musicians packed up their instruments and left the gallery; good nights were hurriedly interchanged; guests who were staying in the house slipped away to their bedrooms; the others went outside, and began calling for their motors, and fled at full speed from Mallingford Abbey. "Twenty minutes after the woman had screamed," said Sir William, "I was left alone, with not a sound in the house, the ballroom empty and silent as the Abbey crypt, and I had to shake myself to make sure that I was awake. And I said to myself, 'Bill Timbertree, you must find another use for this Abbey. No more balls! No more pageants!' "

From the dancers themselves it is difficult to get any coherent account of their experiences. An intelligent woman whom I questioned told me that her first sensation was simply that of unutterable fatigue, which came on without a moment's warning as she saw Lady Wildwater pass through; all power seemed to go out of her limbs, and she had much ado to reach the chairs at the side of the ballroom. "After that," she says, "I became frightened; a nameless

terror came over me; it seemed as though the bottom were dropping out of my being. I thought I was dying." A professor from Smokeover University who was dancing with his daughter puts it rather differently. "I can only describe it," he says, "as a violent inrush of reality upon a world of make-believe, accompanied, in me, with an awful sense of guilt—a feeling that I had taken part in some horrible outrage and was under sentence of death. The feeling began as deep lassitude and overwhelming boredom, but it soon became something much more terrible—a kind of infinite despair, in which I seemed to be utterly forsaken and alone in a black and meaningless universe."

Among the dancers were several medical men from the Smokeover hospitals. They assure me that the occurrence had nothing to do with the Passage of Lady Wildwater through the Ballroom, and make merry over the capital letters I use in writing the words. They call my attention to the fact (which is unquestionable) that the occurrence took place a quarter of an hour after the whole company had returned from the supper room; that the supper had been furnished by a Smokeover caterer whose name had figured in the recent mysterious poisoning of a house-party; that all kinds of rare but questionable viands had been on the supper table; that large quantities of wine had been drunk; that the sudden fatigue experienced by everybody is exactly what you would expect in certain types of poisoning (the names of which I have forgotten); and they conclude, in short, that the whole phenomenon can be explained, as a clear case of natural cause and effect,

in terms of *pâté de foie gras* and champagne. This is the theory which most of the dancers are now disposed to accept, and the only version of the matter which has been allowed to get into the newspapers. Sir William Timbertree however—and he is an authority of some weight—rejects it. So do I.

I continue the story in Sir William's words.

"The next morning the stampede of the servants began. By some means or another—I dare say that Wesleyan minister was at the bottom of it—the story had got about that the old monks were walking. All day long the servants on the place, both indoors and out, were knocking at the library door and saying they wanted to see me, and I was writing cheques for their wages and salaries, or packing 'em off with fleas in their ears, according to past behaviour. The first to come was the housekeeper. There was something wrong with the Abbey, she said, there was an evil influence in the air, that often made her turn faint. It was a bad place and she wouldn't stay in it another day—though she was getting £200 a year. The next was the butler carrying a shirt soaked in jubilee port, which he said a monk had poured over him in the cellar. Then came the keepers—they'd seen the monks riding in the woods. Then came the people from the lodge—they'd seen the monks drawing water out of the Holy Well. Then the boot boy: he said a monk had given him a biff with a bootbrush, and showed me a big lump on the side of his head. And so on to the last Jack and Judy of them. I tell you they'd got the wind up to a pretty tune. All that day and next day it went on.

"When the last of 'em had cleared out and I was all alone in the Abbey I said to myself, 'They're gone; and the likes of them shall never enter this Abbey again. I'll fill it with other people and put it to another use. As a working man I was born and as a working man I will die!' The ghosts are all bunkum, of course. All the same the housekeeper was right. This Abbey's a bad place. I've known it all along, ever since I bid for it at Sharp and Harrison's auction and knocked that American millionaire out of the ring. I felt it while I was walking in the Pageant with a mitre on my head and a rope tied round my stomach. 'What humbug it all is,' I said to myself. I felt it when I saw that dancing crowd go crazy in the ballroom. It's a bad place, I tell you! And we three are going to turn it into a good one! That's why I sent for Paradise Smith. That's why I sent for you. You're interested in Labour, aren't you?"

"Yes," I answered, "I'm a kind of working man myself."

"I thought so. And ghosts, too. You're interested in ghosts? People say you can see 'em."

"I can see nothing else," I answered. "Which is a fatal disqualification in a ghostseer."

"Queer. Don't know what you mean. Metaphysical bunkum most likely. But answer me one thing. Is this Abbey a bad place or a good one?"

"Thoroughly bad. It lies under a condemnation."

"Then you'll help to make it good. And Paradise shall lend a hand. That's the problem to be solved before we separate. But not now. To bed!

And to-morrow morning we'll break the curse on Mallingford Abbey. By God, we will!"

Had Sir William been *converted?* I wondered. Had mistrust come to an end between the Labour Leader and the plutocrat? It might have been. Something strange was astir in the silent Abbey that night. I felt it, and nothing would have surprised me.

This was the point at which we had arrived when Smith and Sir William retired to bed and left me to my lonely watch among the ghosts of Mallingford Abbey.

It was nine o'clock when I awoke from my heavy sleep on the sofa, and coming into the dining-room found an excellent breakfast prepared by Smith and Sir William, the bacon fried, the eggs boiled to the right second, the toast well browned and the coffee hissing in the silver pot with a spirit lamp burning beneath it. They had risen, they said, at five o'clock, had milked the cows without recourse to the Tulcan Calf, and Smith had found time to walk out to the Holy Well and take a morning draught.

But the gravity of their manner clearly showed that something important was in the wind. What it was I was not to discover till later on, for immediately after breakfast, at which both men had been strangely reticent, as though they had a secret to keep, Smith announced that he must return to Smokeover without delay, to attend the meeting of the Coal Inquiry. From the occasional remarks that passed it was evident to me that something of pith and moment had been arranged between them. A

new atmosphere seemed to surround us and I confess it puzzled me. Had they seen the ghosts? No, it was impossible. Their nerves, unlike my own, were of iron.

Before leaving Smith informed Sir William that on reaching Smokeover he would go at once to the Labour Exchange and send down three or four men who were out of work to look after the shorthorn cows and the power-house.

It was then arranged that we three were to meet again in a fortnight. "Paradise has told me all about your Opening Address," said Sir William, "and we are not going to trouble you with this little plan of ours till you have got that off your chest."

On the drive back to Smokeover Smith hardly spoke a word. But when we had left the country and entered the region neither country nor town, where the trams come to their termini, he said:

"Have you chosen the subject of your Address?"

"Yes," I answered, "I am going to speak on 'The Problem of Heroic Labour.' I settled that last night when you got Sir William's box of instruments but couldn't get his fingers, and the owls were hooting in the wood. You remember Lady Wildwater's definition of the 'heaven of Labour' at Mrs. Timperley-Shadwell's dinner-party 'getting the job well done.' I shall start off with that and see what I can make of it."

"You'll make nothing of it," he answered. "You might as well cry for the moon. Anyhow, I shall be there."

I had answered Smith's question about the Address with an effort, hardly knowing what I meant. There

was a weight on my mind and I was full of anxious thoughts and indefinable forebodings—perhaps the result of the ordeal of the night before.

Returning to my house I found the *Smokeover Herald* lying on the study table and began to read the News of the Day. The News was good. An important advance in the reconstruction of Europe had just been achieved, a great strike which had filled Smokeover with unemployed for many months was settled, and a scheme for clearing Shady Hill, Brook Street and the adjoining slums at the cost of a million and a half had been carried the day before in the City Council. It was all most exhilarating to the social consciousness.

Then, turning to the page where things of minor importance are chronicled, there came a shock. It fell like a thunder-stroke on the social part of me and left me for that day, and for many days to come, with no interest whatever in the affairs of this world. Lady Wildwater, so ran the the fatal paragraph, returning to the North of Scotland from the Pageant at Mallingford Abbey, where she had played the part of Queen Philippa, had been killed the night before in a motor accident near Inverness. I read no more of the *Smokeover Herald.*

I shall not weary the reader with a long account of my Opening Address to the Smokeover Problem Club. It was an attempt to develop the lessons about Labour which I had learnt when listening to the argument between Smith and Sir William by the Holy Well at Mallingford. It was not a success. There was, I suppose, a tone of melancholy in it,

due, no doubt, to the shock of Lady Wildwater's death, which had left the world very dark to me and from which I was long in recovering. I had the feeling, so fatal to good performance in oratory, that I was doing something of no importance. The faces of the people before me were a crowd of masks and they bored me as much as I bored them. When I quoted her definition of "the heaven of Labour" Lady Wildwater's image came before me with overwhelming vividness and I nearly broke down. The intellectuals objected to the Address on the ground that it contained no "solution to the problem" I had raised. They pointed out endless difficulties that would attend the adoption of my ideas. Some of them described it, not I am afraid without reason, as "a feeble imitation of Carlyle, with bits of Ruskin and William Morris thrown in here and there." The Labour men, who were present in great numbers, were furious. A single unfortunate remark at the beginning turned them against me *en masse*. I said the present dispute between Labour and Capital reminded me of a quarrel on a sinking ship between the officers on one side and the crew on the other, as to *which of them was to drown first*, as the Cambridge Professor used to tell us in Norway, and added that both parties would be far better employed in saving the ship. This convinced them that I was a capitalist agent in disguise and they continued to interrupt me from first to last with disconcerting outbursts of opposition. Smith, however, admitted that there "might be something in it" and courageously said as much in the speech in which he moved the Vote of Thanks. I am pretty sure the

Vote was not carried, though the Chairman, on a show of hands, declared it was. The only out and out encouragement I received came from Father Sebastian. He was not present, but reading a report of my Address in the newspapers he wrote as follows:—

"I congratulate you on having said what you really believe and not what you merely want other people to applaud you for saying. Keep that up, and you will find yourself at last safe-anchored in the haven where you would be."

A few days afterwards the interesting announcement was made in the Press that Sir William Timbertree, Baronet, had definitely joined the Labour Party and been accepted as Labour candidate at the next election for the Cloverfield Division of Everstrike. I was not so foolish, however, as to think that my Address produced his conversion. It were truer to say that his conversion, which was due to causes deep as the universe, produced my Address.

In due course the meeting arranged between Smith, Sir William and myself took place. It took place, as before, beside the Holy Well in Mallingford Park. There we plotted out and, in a manner, set on foot a certain project, the precise nature of which I am not at present permitted to make public. But I may say this. If our project proves practicable, as we think it may, Mallingford Abbey will become, in the near future, the Headquarters of the Labour Party—not however for Party organization, nor even for providing tired Labour Ministers with restful week-ends, but for a very different purpose. What

that purpose is I can only indicate (at present) by saying that we have approached the Penderghoste Trustees to help in carrying it out. Lady Gwendoline Penderghoste, it will be remembered, left her residuary estate in Trust, for the founding of schools, "which the pupils would never want to leave."

What, then, is the precise significance of Sir William's conversion? What old errors has he renounced? What new truths embraced? And what, if any, has been the effect of his conversion on Smith?

For full information on these points we shall have to wait until the two candidates issue their Election Addresses to the respective Divisions of Cloverfield and Paradise. Both men so far have been wisely reticent as to details. But from conversations in which they have very generously allowed me to take part, I have been able to form a fairly accurate idea of what their "policy" will be, and to infer therefrom the real nature of Sir William's conversion and of its effect upon Smith.

Clearly they have agreed to come before their constituencies on a common platform. Clearly, also, they will startle the country by a scheme of *nationalization* far more extensive and thoroughgoing than any which the Labour Party, or even the extreme section of it, has so far dared to ventilate either in the House of Commons, at the Trades Union Congress, the Party Conference, the Street Corner, or elsewhere.

They will demand the nationalization, forthwith, of the entire manhood and womanhood of the com-

munity on the lines laid down in the Penderghoste Will.

Their Election Addresses, as I here venture to forecast them, will begin by announcing the general principle that the nationalization of the means and instruments of production accomplishes nothing whatsoever unless the men who use them are nationalized at the same time. Or, as Sir William will put it in his rather egotistic way, "the nationalization of my box of instruments amounts to nothing, unless you nationalize *me*." Having said which, he will present himself for nationalization, as a free-will offering to the nation, long white fingers and all. And Smith, *mutatis mutandis*, will do likewise.

From this general basis the two Addresses will proceed to a more specific formulation of the New Policy. They will demand the nationalization of the miner as well as the mine, of the driver as well as the locomotive, of the pianist as well as the piano, of the surgeon as well as the knife, of the editor as well as the newspaper, of the writer as well as the printing press, of the preacher as well as the pulpit, arguing in each case that the nationalization of the instrument is futile without the nationalization of the man behind it.

Thus our two candidates will supplement the demand for a Capital Levy by the demand for a Labour Levy, to be imposed impartially on all workers, whether of hand or brain, and gradually leading up to the abolition of *private property in Labour*, as the final objective. And lest their policy should be confused with that of the Russian Soviets our candidates will demand *the nationalization of the*

Labour Party itself, as the first step towards the grand consummation; explaining this to mean that the Party shall convert itself forthwith into a national organization of industrious men and women, the State requiring everybody to work *hard* and the Church teaching them to work *well*.

The most significant passage in Sir William's address will turn upon his vast surgical experience; doubtless many will regard it as betraying the bias of his profession. After reciting the social evils of Cloverfield and the neighbouring constituencies, he will divide them into two classes: those that are amenable to *medical treatment*, and those that can only be dealt with by the *surgeon's knife*. These latter he will claim as his own special province, and will call for an immediate *Operation*, to be performed without anæsthetic on the general *corpus* of those societies, as the only means of saving them from worse to come. He will indicate the nature of the social sepsis in suitable terminology, some of it borrowed from the New Testament (which Sir William appears to have been reading) and some from the *Medical Dictionary;* he will speak of hands that must be cut off, of eyes that must be plucked out without a moment's delay, and will warn the electors, in language of the utmost gravity, against the folly of supposing that maladies so malignant are to be cured by soothing drugs, warm fomentations, generous diet, sea air, horse-exercise, port wine, or suchlike agreeable restoratives, furnished, though they be, at the public expense. He will propose to cut off the Drink and to cut off the Dole and to cut off the Luxuries. He will urge the

electors, rich and poor, to show they are worthy of self-representative government by voting themselves *en masse* into these painful Operations, and by supporting the man who promises to use the Knife on every mother's son of them. "Vote for the Knife and for the Man who can use it" will be Sir William's slogan, displayed in letters a foot long on every hoarding in the Cloverfield Division of Everstrike. "Heroes All" will be Smith's in the Paradise Division of Smokeover. From which it will be seen that both the candidates are in favour of strict constitutional methods.

But not of primrose paths to the Millennium. For the first time in the history of Smokeover-cum-Everstrike "resurrection without crucifixion" as the formula of 'progress' will be definitely abandoned. Appeal will be made to the "common will" of both constituencies to assert the *right to suffer pain* as chief among the Rights of Man, and then to embark on a Descent into Hell, as the first stage of the 'progress' whose last will be an Ascent into Heaven—the Heaven of "getting the job well done"—thus fulfilling the dream of our Bard, who sings of the day when Smokeover, having borne a Cross, shall "put on her beautiful raiment and shine as the King's daughter."

Alas that Lady Wildwater will not be there to aid our candidates in "the solution of the problem," to stand by them on the platform, to move the main Resolution, and to animate the voters by the living splendour of her presence. This most assuredly she would have done, and many a time has Smith, who was the first to predict her triumph on the plat-

form, bewailed in my hearing the calamity that has fallen on the Party. Yet who shall say that Sir William, on that fatal night when the chills of death came upon me in Bedroom 27, was wrong in suspecting her as the cause of "the whole affair"?

In my hours of depression, which have been frequent since the Passage of Lady Wildwater, I tremble for the political fate of my two friends. There is a sense of impending tragedy as though the worst had yet to come. My own support, which I have promised as an act of piety to the memory of the dead—and I am certain she is bidding me forward on that path—may do the cause more harm than good. Visions of a smashing defeat rise up before me. I see my friends at the bottom of the poll with a vote so small that their deposits will have to be forfeited.

And there are moments (the gloom being then at its deepest) when a darker vision haunts the chambers of my imagination. I see two men on Golgotha. I see them fallen a sacrifice to the "good conscience" that is in their fellow citizens. And again I say, alas that Lady Wildwater will not be there, to embalm their broken bodies and to give them burial when all the rest have forsaken them and fled. But these are mere moods, and when they have passed, the pillar of fire she kindled is still burning before me, a light in which all else stands defined but is itself indefinable.

It will be a critical Election. For, as every one knows, what Paradise and Cloverfield think to-day, England thinks to-morrow.

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